

Fourteen Qualifications for Pastors, Elders, Overseers

Introduction: 1 Timothy 3:1-7 contains the qualifications for local church leaders. (A similar list is found in Titus 1:6-8). Paul does not here give a job description for elders; that study is for another time. The main point is this: Only character-qualified men should be appointed to leadership.

Universal Application: Don't tune out, thinking this does not apply to you if you are not an elder. Every Christian man, whether in leadership or not, should have as his goal to embody each of these characteristics. The only quality that might be out of reach concerns the ability to teach (3:2). Otherwise, there is no reason the rest of these qualities shouldn't eventually be true in the life of each man in the church. Single sisters: these are the qualities you should look for in the man you marry.

******What can we learn about the office of overseer from 3:1?** It is a noble task. It is commendable to serve Jesus as a church leader. It is a high calling.

What adjective does 1 Timothy 3:1 use to describe the ministry of overseer? It is described as a noble "task" or "work" (NASV). It is from *ergon* (2041), "work, employment, labor." Serving as an overseer is hard work, a labor of love. It also is not an "office" to be filled. Despite how some English versions render this verse, there is no underlying Greek word for "office." It is ministry more than it is a position.

Why do you suppose Paul felt the need to explain that this is a "trustworthy saying" (1Ti 3:1)? This is one of several times Paul mentioned a trustworthy saying in this letter. Evidently there was some misunderstanding concerning church leadership.

- **"aspires" (3:1):** From *orego* (3713), which literally means "to stretch out, to reach after"; thus, to stretch oneself out in order to touch something, to reach out after something. ¹ A related idea in this verse is "desires":
- **"desires" (3:1):** From *epithumeo* (1937), "desire, lust, covet, crave"; *epi* is a preposition that can denote increase or addition when use in composition—thus, here, *epi* is an intensifier; *thumos* means "heat, passion" (basis for "thermos"). Thus, *epithumeo* denotes hot heat, intense passion, even lust.

Application: There is nothing inappropriate about having a desire to be an overseer.

Is the aspiration and desire to be a church leader one of the requirements for being a leader? Such a desire is not a requirement. Paul is here 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 do so anyway if it were asked of him. However, a man should not have to be pressured into being an elder:

¹ Joseph Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 4th ed., (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 452.

ESV 1 Peter 5:1-2 . . . I exhort the elders . . . shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you . . .

- “**overseer**” (3:1): It is important to note that in Scripture, the terms overseer, elder and pastor all refer to the same person, the same office.² Furthermore, there was no hierarchy of authority within the local church leadership team. No one elder was over the other elders. There was no senior pastor, no presiding bishop, no pecking order, no pyramid.

The word 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 highlights out the leader’s job of managing, administrating, being sure things in the church are doing according to God’s will.

Here in our text, overseer is from *episkopé* (1984), basis for the English word “episcopal”; *epi* generally means “over, upon” and *skopos* means “to look, see” (basis for “scope, optic”). Thus, it is one who oversees something.

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 protectors and guardians of truth. It was also a title for an administrator in the Greek legal system.³

Thus, the root concept of *episkopos* is “overseer, guardian”; one who keeps watch over the needs of people.⁴

W.W.II Torpedo Bomber. Elders serve other functions as well. During the Battle of Midway (World War II), an American bomber squadron discovered and attacked the Japanese fleet. Tragically, the squadron attacked without American fighter escort. It proved suicidal. All the bombers were shot down by Japanese fighter planes. One function of elders is that they are to the church what the American fighters were supposed to have been to the bombers: **protection** (see **Acts 20:29-31**).

Perspective: The fighters exist for the sake of the bombers. So too the church does not exist for the sake of the elders, but rather the elders exist for the sake of the church!

Thayer’s definition: “an overseer, one charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done are done rightly.”⁵ For example, an elder is a quality control man as regards decorum in the Lord’s Day gathering (the Lord’s Supper and the Participatory Meeting). It is an elder’s duty to be sure church meetings are edifying.

² Titus 1:5-9; Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-2.

³ Richard Henderson, “The First Epistle of Paul to Timothy” (Lecture notes, Mid-America Baptist Seminary, Fall, 1982).

⁴ Lothar Coenen, “Bishop, Presbyter, Elder”, in *Dictionary of New Testament Theology* ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), Vol. 1, 188.

⁵ Thayer, *Lexicon*, 243.

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 at stake. Many of these qualifications are overlapping, like links on a chain.

1. Above Reproach (3:2)

- **“above reproach” (3:2):** A “reproach” is an expression of disapproval or disappointment. The NKJV renders this as “blameless.” It is from *anepileptos* (423); *an* means “not”, *epi* means “upon” and *lambano* means “to take”; hence, “unreproachable” or “not able to be taken hold of”.⁶ It refers to someone above any reasonable criticism, someone upon whom there is no handle at all for accusation, one who cannot be laid hold upon.⁷ It refers to spotless character, to a man who is of good report and who has a good reputation.

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

What is the difference between being “above reproach” (1Ti 3:2) and being sinless? 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.

Perspective: “This call to be above reproach really sums up the thrust of all the other qualifications that follow.”⁸

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

- **“the husband of one wife” (3:2):** An examination of the actual Greek here is helpful: *mias gunaikos andra*, literally “a one woman man.” It is helpful to realize that there is not a separate Greek word for “wife.” When “wife” is meant, the word “woman” (*gunikas*) often used in conjunction with a definite article (“the”). However, when used with an indefinite article (“a”), as here in 3:2, *gunikas* is often rendered “woman.” Using the word “woman” without a “the” also can denote essence or nature.

Thus, an overseer is to be a one-woman kind of man; 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.

Does this mean that a divorced man cannot be an elder? The word “divorce” is not used 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.

⁶ Fritz Rienecker, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), 622.

⁷ Kenneth Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies From the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1973), Vol. II, 52.

⁸ Orrick, Payne, Fullerton, *Encountering God Through Expository Preaching* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 7.

PPT>>> Caution: Concerning divorced men, Strauch notes, “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”.⁹

Could Paul have had polygamy in mind when writing this? When Paul wrote this, polygamy was not a problem in the Roman world, due to the widespread pagan practice of affairs outside marriage. Concubines were regularly maintained for sexual pleasure (as an informal but permanent union outside of marriage).

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.

Does the phrase “one woman man” imply that a single man (i.e., never married) cannot be an elder? Not in and of itself. The requirement is that the man, single or married, not be a womanizer. Any prohibition of a single (never married) man being an elder would occur in a later qualification.

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?*¹⁰

3. Sober-Minded (3:2)

- **“sober-minded” (3:2):** The Greek word literally refers to the opposite of being intoxicated. It is from *nepalios* (3524), “sober.” Figuratively, it meant complete clarity of mind and the resulting good judgment. In 3:2, it would seem to refer to the figurative use since the consumption of literal wine is dealt with in 3:3. The NIV renders this as “temperate”. In English, the figurative meaning of sober is to be marked by an earnestly thoughtful character or demeanor.¹¹ Thus, the overseer is to be levelheaded, well balanced, clearheaded, freed of all excess, stable.

Imagine the scene: A drunk man driving a car down the road, swerving from one side to the other, versus a sober person driving a car down the road in a straight line. Some believers, though they have not been drinking, are characterized by fuzzy thinking, erratic actions, extremes, lack of focus, or instability. A man given to extremes is not qualified to be an elder. A man who makes a lot of bad choices is not ready to be an elder. A man who experiences extreme mood swings is not ready to be an elder.

⁹ Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1988), 197.

¹⁰ Orick, Payne, Fullerton, *Expository*, 8.

¹¹ “Sober”, Merriam-Webster.com. Accessed December 1, 2019.

4. Self-Controlled (3:2)

- **“self-controlled” (3:2):** It is from *sophrōn* (4998), which describes someone who is reasonable, sensible, of a sound mind; from the root *sozo* (“to save”) and *phren* (“thinking, mind”).¹² Thus, literally, saved thinking—of a wholesome mind, sensible thinking. It is rendered in the NASV as “prudent”. The dictionary defines prudent as “marked by wisdom” or “shrewd in the management of practical affairs”.¹³ Out of this, in general, comes the idea of self controlled.

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

Application: A full-time church leader often works under minimal supervision. With so much unsupervised time, it is important that the church know he is working hard as unto the Lord. An overseer must be a self starter and be able to work unsupervised. The church leader must not be “invisible six days a week and incomprehensible on the seventh . . . incomprehensible preaching is not an indication of too much study; it is an indication of too little study and prayerful meditation.”¹⁴

PPT>>> **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.”¹⁵

5. Respectable (3:2)

- **“respectable” (3:2):** In English, “respectable” means “regarded by society to be good, proper, or correct” and “decent or correct in character or behavior”. The Greek here is *kosmos* (2887), “orderly, proper” (basis for the English “cosmos, cosmetic”). An overseer’s life is to be well-arranged, well-ordered. He is to have his “act” together.

6. Hospitable (3:2)

- **“hospitable” (NIV, NAS, NKJV, 3:2):** From *philoxenos* (5382); taken literally, *philos* means “affection” and *xenos* means “stranger”; thus, “one who is fond of strangers.” In today’s English, to be hospitable means to be given to the generous and cordial reception of guests. The elder is to have a home that is open to others. It is important for a church leader to have people over for fellowship, counseling, training discipleship, meals, prayer meetings, Bible studies, or to host itinerant church workers.

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. New Testament Christianity was very warm, relational, and home based.

¹² Siegfried Wibbing, “Discipline” in *Dictionary of New Testament Theology* ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), Vol. 1, 501.

¹³ “Prudent”, Merriam-Webster.com. Accessed December 1, 2019.

¹⁴ Orick, Payne, Fullerton, *Expository*, 12.

¹⁵ Struach, *Eldership*, 176.

7. Able to Teach (3:2)

This qualification is not a character quality, but a skill. This is where a lot of otherwise qualified potential elder candidates get off the bus. There is such a thing as the spiritual gift of teaching, and either you got, or you don't. It is like Louie Armstrong once said about jazz, if you have to ask what it is, you'll never know! However, beside the gift of teaching, to some extent it is also a skill that can be learned. Someone without the gift can still develop the skill.

PPT>>> Strauch observes that this requirement entails three basic elements: "a knowledge of Scripture, the readiness to teach, and the capacity to communicate".¹⁶

Application: 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 he is disqualified to be an overseer. A boring speaker is not qualified to be a leader. Delivery matters.¹⁷

PPT>>> ESV 2 Timothy 2:24-25 . . . the Lord's servant must . . . be . . . able to teach . . .

PPT>>> 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. With this qualification we get a glimpse into the job description of a overseer. Teaching is an essential duty of an overseer. This one requirement makes for the difference in qualification between an elder and a deacon.

Arguably, an elder's main authority lies in his ability to persuade people with the truth. It is through teaching and training that leaders feed and equip God's flock.

PPT>>> ESV Titus 1:9-11 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 . . .

There is more error today than when Paul wrote to Titus. There are people wrongly into Torah-compliant churches, baptismal regeneration, the prosperity Gospel, hyper-preterism, a protestant purgatory, the inspiration of the KJV, Unitarianism, works salvation, etc.

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

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

If an elder holds to a doctrinal falsehood, the whole church is liable to led astray into error.

Application: 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 writer bragged that in his small church, "I don't know their beliefs and they don't ask me about mine." This is a recipe for disaster.

¹⁶ Strauch, *Eldership*, 197.

¹⁷ Orick, Payne, Fullerton, *Expository*, 115.

PPT>>> P.T. Forsyth:¹⁸ “One man who truly knows his Bible is worth more to the church’s real strength than a crowd of workers who do not.”

Application: The ingredients of a 1 Corinthians 14 meeting include a “lesson” (14:26). In depth teaching is an critical ingredient for a healthy church. It is important for a church leader or an otherwise gifted teacher to give a quality Scriptural exposition every Lord’s Day as part of the participatory meeting. Example: Out of a 1.5 to 2 hour participatory meeting, perhaps 45 minutes of it could be devoted to the lesson.

How is the *ability* to teach (1Ti 3:2) different from having the *gift* of teaching (Ro 12:7)? 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 (Ep 4:11). The requirement in 1 Timothy 3 is simply that the elder be “able” to instruct the church from the Bible. Those elders actually gifted to teach may be referred to in Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Timothy 5:17ff.¹⁹

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.”²⁰

8. Not A Drunkard (3:3)

- **“not a drunkard” (3:3):** A drunkard is one who is habitually drunk. The Greek here is two words, *mé paroinon*; *mé* means “not”, *para* means “beside” and *oinos* means “wine.” That is, he must not linger long beside a bottle of wine. The issue here is drunkenness, not abstinence. A dynamic translation might be “must not abuse alcohol”. The NASV has, “not addicted to wine”.

Dealing with church problems can drive a man to drink! If an elder has a drinking problem, the church will not be managed well.

PPT>>> 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.

9. Not Violent but Gentle (3:3)

- **“not violent but gentle” (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). You do not want a guy to be an elder who is given to punching people in the nose!

¹⁸ Scottish pastor and theologian, 1848-1921; quoted in Strauch, *Eldership*, 198.

¹⁹ Some have suggested that this would be better rendered by “teachable” since all the qualifications up to this point have been character qualities rather than skills. However, there is a word for “teachable” (*didaktos*), but that is not used here. Instead, *didaktikos* is used, which clearly means “apt to teach” (also found in 2Ti 2:24).

²⁰ Orick, Payne, Fullerton, *Expository*, 34.

“Gentle” on the other hand, in English means to be free from harshness, sternness or violence.²¹ The Greek is *epieikés* (1933), “yielding, forbearing, kind.” It is used outside the New Testament of someone who has the legal right and capacity 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.²² The idea is of someone who avoids contention.

An example of this type of gentle approach would be Paul’s reasoning with Philemon to take back the run-away slave Onesimus (gentle persuasion).

PPT>>> NAS **Proverbs 15:1** A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

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 so that people can believe us when we speak of God’s supernatural power to help them overcome sin.”²³

10. Not Quarrelsome (3:3)

- “not quarrelsome” (3:3): It is from *amachos* (269); *a* means “not” and *maché* means “fight, combat, battle” (basis for the English “macho”); thus, “not quarrelsome, not given to combat.” Uncontentious may be the idea, “not a brawler” (KJV). 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.

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

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

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

PPT>>> **Why is it important for an overseer to (#11) not be a “lover of money” (3:3)?** See *Acts 11:30, 1 Timothy 6:6-10, 1 Peter 5:1ff**. It is a sign of spiritual immaturity!

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.

PPT>>> 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 and pierced themselves with many pangs.

²¹ “Gentle”, Merriam-Webster.com. Accessed December 1, 2019.

²² Wolfgang Bauder, “Humility, Weakness” in *Dictionary of New Testament Theology* ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), Vol. 2, 256.

²³ Orick, Payne, Fullerton, *Expository*, 10.

- a. Greed in business by a bi-vocational church leader would be well known in a community and could thus be a bad witness.
- b. Being a full-time elder is typically not a lucrative way to make a living. If an elder were not content with less income than he might otherwise earn in a secular employment, a real problem could develop. He might be tempted to steal, or to envy.

ESV **John 12:4-6** But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii¹ 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.

Example: One American missionary 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 became more prosperous than the missionary and lived the kind of life he had give up to serve them (driving nice cars and living in nice houses). The missionary admitted to feelings of jealous and resentment.

- c. If the elder were a lover of money, there is always a temptation to temper the truth if a certain teaching could result in lost donations.
- d. In 1 Peter 5:2, Peter requires that elders not be "greedy for money." This warning shows there can be financial remuneration for serving the church, but as above, there must be contentment.

PPT>>> ESV **1 Peter 5:2** shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;

e. Church leaders sometimes handled the church's money:

PPT>>> ESV **Acts 11:29-30** . . . the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders . . .

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.

12. Manages Household Well: Submissive Children (3:4)

******What is the answer to the question in 1 Timothy 3:4-5? See Matthew 25:21.** A man who cannot manage his own home cannot manage the church. If he an over-bearing tyrant and unreasonable at home, so too will he be in church. If he is totally tuned out at home, so too will he be in church. If he is disorganized at home, so too will he be at church.

PPT>>> "The ministry is no place for the man whose life is a continual confusion of unaccomplished plans and unorganized activity".²⁴

²⁴ Kent, Homer, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), 127.

What does 1 Timothy 3:4-5 imply about an elder's job description? It involves management. A church does not simply run itself. Someone has to oversee it, to guide things, to plan ahead, to serve in quality control, to motivate, to comfort, to serve as a sort of father figure. The elder has to have his hand on the rudder!

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

PPT>>> The home is the testing ground and results will be evidenced in his children. His children must be submissive.

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

Requirement: "the elder is called to have a well-managed home where his children are submissive to him and not living scandalously and riotously."²⁵

- **"dignity" (3:4):** When it comes to child training and parenting styles, the words that should characterize the way an elder controls his children is "with all dignity." Some parents do manage to control their children, but it is not with dignity. Instead, there are threats, frustration, anger, excuses, raised voices, etc. An elder has to have learned the art not only of keeping his children submissive, but with all dignity.

Interesting: Where does 3:1-5 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 seminary degree, and then deny another man simply because he does not have such a degree. To be sure, seminary education is a wonderful blessing. It should not be looked down upon. But neither is it a requirement for service. The best seminary is learning to shepherd the flock by being a husband and father.

13. Not a Recent Convert (3:6)

******According to 1 Timothy 3:6, what danger lies in allowing (#13) a "recent convert" to be an overseer?** A new convert may become puffed up with conceit. The Titus 1 list of leadership qualifications states that he must not be "arrogant".

- **"conceited" (3:6)** is 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 (Thayer).
- **"not be a recent convert" (3:6):** From *neophutos* (3504); *neo* means "new" (as in neo-orthodox) and *phutos* means "plant" (basis for neophyte).

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

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.²⁶

²⁵ Orick, Payne, Fullerton, *Expository*, 9.

²⁶ Kent, *Pastoral*, 130.

What is the condemnation of the devil (3:6)? Satan was condemned by God because of pride (Ez 28).

Signs of Arrogance: “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.”²⁷

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

****** Based on 1 Timothy 3:7, why must an overseer be “well thought of with outsiders”?**

The world is often a shrewd judge of character, readily observing insincerity and inconsistency. No matter how respected within the church, if outsiders distrust him due to a past bad reputation, then he is not to be an overseer!

PPT>>> “The *vox populi* . . . is in some sort a *vox Dei*”.²⁸

Is the implication here (3:7) that you could fool your friends (3:7)?

Insight: New Testament overseers were “home grown.” That is, they were well known both in the church and the community before becoming overseers. They had secular jobs (at least at first). Unlike what is common today, church leaders were not unfamiliar professional pastors who were called from afar by a pulpit committee.

The devil gets mentioned a second time. What is the devil’s snare (1Ti 3:7)? The devil’s snare appears to be disgrace coming from a poor reputation with outsiders. Perhaps some bad information will come to light after he is made an elder, bringing disgrace upon him. If everyone he works with has a low view of him, if his neighbors are scandalized by him, then beware . . . the devil will make it known.

What role would the devil like to play in the selection of elders (1Ti 3:6-7)?

Satan is alive and well on planet earth and seeking opportunities to hurt the church. 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?**

So What?

After reading over the list, are you amazed that anybody qualifies? Does this seem overwhelming to you? Do not despair. God would not have given these requirements unless the Holy Spirit was able to mature men for this ministry. However, we must be cautious:

ESV 1 Timothy 5:22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.

²⁷ Orick, Payne, Fullerton, *Expository*, 9.

²⁸ Kent, *Pastoral*, 131.

PPT>>> **ESV 3 John 1:9-10** I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.

A person like Diotrephes is the last type of person you would want to appoint to be an elder.

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 good managers of their family. They are to be the standard of what a mature believer is to be like.

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

Teacher Preparation: To help you prepare to teach this, go to www.sermonaudio.com/ntrf and our series on Early Church Practice and find this lesson.

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