

1 Timothy 3:4-7

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September 25, 2005

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“He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?); and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

Introduction

Good morning. Well, it's good to be gathered with our community of believers here. If you turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy 3, we will finish up that first and excellent section in the first seven verses that deal with the qualifications of an elder.

I'll pose a question (one that you have probably heard a number of times before, but maybe don't recall), and that is “What do you want to be when you grow up?” It's a question that we often find ourselves asking young children. Bekah wants to be a mom. At other times, she wants to fly a boat or whatever. There are all kinds of weird stuff that children just want to be. You would a typical young man to say, “I want to be a firefighter or a police officer.” We ask them because innate in our nature and theirs is a sense of what it means for someone to actually mature, to grow up into responsibility and to do something with the initiative or with the abilities that God had granted to us. See there's an assumption that as we mature, we actually take on responsibility and accomplish things that are worthwhile.

Why am I bringing that up as we look at verses 4-7 this morning? Many of you might be thinking “Why are you spending so much time on this? Certainly, it's an important topic, but isn't it just an issue of me knowing in general terms what the qualifications of an elder are so I might, as part of the congregation, be able to pinpoint and make sure someone is not disqualified?”

No, it's more than that. The core issue that these qualifications speak to is what a man should become or rather, what a mature man *in Christ* actually becomes. In fact, it speaks to us to such a degree that no matter who you are in this room whether you're a lady or a young kid or a student or an older person, there are in these qualifications a sense of what it means to find a man that is mature in the things of the Lord.

The question of what do you want to be when you grow up is addressed in a more important and spiritual dimension when we look at the qualifications of the overseer. The overseer or elder should be the example of what our young ones in the congregation want to actually become when they grow up; not necessarily that everyone should want to become a pastor. That is not necessarily a good thing, but instead that everyone should desire to emulate certain characteristics, certain character qualities that they see in the men that are to honor the Lord and stand in gap for God's people.

That is why these qualifications are so significant to us. That is why it matters to everyone in this room because it shows us what it means to be a believer who is mature and growing and hopeful of the things of Christ. What exactly is it that you want to be? What particular things are you hoping you would grow into as a spiritual man or woman? When we start to lose sight of how, what, and who we want to become, then it's a guarantee that we will never become that individual that God has desired for us; to make manifest, to demonstrate the power of God in His holy Word.

Well, with that in mind, we look at these last three qualifications in verses 4-7 and in them we notice that they are extremely practical in nature: 1) Having a godly home; 2) Making sure we are not prideful; and 3) Making sure we have a right reputation with those who are outside the Church.

So let's go to the Lord and ask that He would instruct us in this time and make the Word of God profitable to us unto His glory. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father,

We come before You and we give You praise. We thank You for just the Word of God. We thank You that we have just been able to sit together in a congregation of believers and to lift our voices, Lord, and to praise and exalt Your name.

Lord, indeed you are the great God. You are the majestic One. And Lord, we are amazed not just at Your transcendence, how great You are even as Pastor Gary was talking about last week, but indeed how much You have desired Lord to have a relationship with us, for sending Your only Son that He might die for our sins. What an amazing thing!

And Father, as we consider just Your graciousness, as we consider just how magnanimous You are, how huge You are, how powerful You are, how holy and excellent You are Lord, may it make us understand that we do not have the right to live our lives in whatever manner, whatever selfish manner suits us most.

Instead Lord, we should desiring to see our lives transformed and conformed to Your image, that we may best use ourselves, our lives, the purpose for which You have created us, so that You might receive the glory.

And Lord, as we look at these final few qualifications of the elder, help us, each one of us, to see if these are things we desire to emulate ourselves; to see if we have stopped in the course of the running of our Christian race, to just kind of observe to see if anyone else wants to do the task.

Instead Lord, teach us the initiative that is inspired by the Word of God by the power of the Holy Spirit that we might seek out diligently those things that are most excellent for us to consume our lives with.

Teach us to be careful about the things of the world, Lord, and protect us that we might keep our hearts and our focus upon that which is most worthwhile in this life—to make You known and to live in a manner which glorifies You and brings You worth.

*We pray these things in Jesus Christ's holy name,
Amen.*

Review of 1 Timothy 3:1-3

“It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money.”

So we come to this last and final section in the qualifications of an elder, and let's read back in 1 Timothy 3:1-3 to give us the background as we get to this final one. In verse 1 it says **“It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.”** It speaks of this aspiration as a good desire. It is a desire that is noble and excellent. For a young man to say “One day, it would be great if I can minister to everyone else and lead and shepherd in the church” that is not wrong. It can be twisted into a selfish, prideful exuberance, but nevertheless, it is not in of itself a bad thing. In fact, it's an excellent thing for all men to desire, to display, leadership as Christ has desired it.

“An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife...”

We talked about the umbrella statement of being **“above reproach,”** that there is nothing in his reputation that people could point to say that this individual is guilty of this problem. There are a few things that are listed after that **“the husband of one wife”** and we talked about how that means he's a man of purity and of conviction concerning his love.

“An overseer, then, must be... temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money.”

He is **“temperate”** in that he is careful about his attitude and the manner in which he approaches things. He's **“prudent, respectable, hospitable...”** Remember, he's a stranger-lover and **“able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.”**

After giving us this short list of what an overseer should not be (i.e. negative things), Paul now through the inspiration of the Spirit, gives us three qualities that demonstrate his maturity and his worth. These are the three things. They are so practical in nature. In fact, each one is given to us with a sense of gravity and consequence.

The first one that Paul through the inspiration of the Spirit gives to us is in 1 Timothy 3:4-5. Let's look at that one together.

First Practical Qualification of an Overseer (1 Timothy 3:4-5)

“He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?);”

One of the main practical qualifications of an elder is that he has a godly home life; that he has demonstrated that he manages his own household well. The idea of managing speaks to “having an authority or presiding over.” It also speaks of the initiative that a godly man displays in the care of his household.

“He must be one who manages his own household well...”

The word “**manages**” is an interesting Greek term *proistemi* (προϊστέμι), which means to “go before” or “initially.” In early Greek writings, it meant “to go before somebody.” So, it gives you that word picture of somebody leading the pack or going before the others. It’s the leader that steps ahead. Later on in classical Greek, it became used for things like “a patron” or “a protector.”

So what was once used literally (i.e. “to go before somebody”) is later used more figuratively (i.e. “a patron who takes care of me”). Encompassed in this idea is not so much a management by way of efficiency, but leadership by way of protection. Do you understand that? Because it’s easy for us to look at that and think “Does he manage his household well? Well, let’s see. He *does* he pay his bills on time; he *does* make good money. Does he look to get a secondary degree that he might earn more?” We might look at those things and decide whether he is a good manager; a good CEO of his house.

The word for “**manage**” however, does not address the administrative aspect of leading. Rather, the word addresses this idea of someone that goes before and stands in the gap; one who protects, leads, and guides. It’s a great word. It means that if you are to be an elder, a pastor, if you are to be a leader in the church, you are called not to be an efficient leader, but as a sacrificial, loving protector.

Notice there that he manages his own household and he does it “**well.**” This term *kalos* (καλῶς) means “good,” but not in the sense of versus evil. It’s not just morally good. The idea is that it is excellent or it is commendable or appropriate. It is good in that sense. In fact, one of the best lexicons describes it this way as “fitly, appropriately, in the right way, commendably, rightly, correctly.” There is this idea that he manages his household in an appropriate or in a correct fashion.

I like what Dr. William Muntz says in his commentary about this qualification. “The emphasis is not so much on the quality of the performance, although that is certainly part of it, as it is doing something in the correct way.” That is very insightful and it is important to understand what he is trying to address here. When Paul says that he is one that manages his household well or more appropriately, that he does it very well, it goes beyond those duties he does to manage his family.

Does he lead his family in a manner that is spiritually appropriate? That question puts a different spin on what we mean by manage well. For example, it is possible for you to be a good dad, but not a godly dad. There are a lot of unbelieving dads out there who are pretty good guys. It’s also possible for you to be a good husband, but not actually shepherd your wife; to not actually do that which God actually calls you to do and not love her in a sacrificial way (i.e. in the same manner which Christ died for the Church).

Just to drive home this point—because it’s so important—an elder is not *just* to be a provider for his home. No, his provision ought to be personal, profound and in the likeness of Jesus Christ. Remember in John 10:11-16, when Jesus talks about Himself being the Good Shepherd? One of the incredible things He says about being the Good Shepherd is not just “I feed the sheep” or “I clean the sheep” or “I make sure the sheep move along or I spank the sheep. I discipline them.” No. Those things are all included in the idea of a good shepherd, but He says what makes Him a Good Shepherd versus the hireling is that He does those things because the sheep matter to him. He says “*I know My own, and My own know Me.*” ([John 10:14](#))

There is a relationship there that is genuine. It is personal and it is profound. A man that does not understand how to shepherd in a personal and profound way in that which is the most basic unit, the most basic social unit that God has blessed us to have (i.e. his family, his wife), how can he, according to verse 5, manage the household of God? It’s a question that doesn’t need to be answered because the answer is *he can’t*. It’s not possible.

It’s not enough for me to be just a fun dad. I’m a fun dad. I hope I don’t have to tell you—I’m fun! The kids aren’t here, so we’ll just assume that’s true. I’m a fun dad. I’m might also be a nice husband, but that is not enough. Any human being can muster enough energy to be a decent person to his kids and to his wife, but that is not enough.

I’m supposed to be the kind of husband that mirrors the love of Christ for the Church. Isn’t that what Ephesians 5 teaches us? I’m supposed to be the kind father who is careful that I don’t exasperate my kids; that I don’t drive them to rebellion because I’m so harsh on them, but at the same time, I would never spare the rod; that I might discipline them that they have that right and excellent tension; that they might understand through my example that if the Lord should discipline me, I would accept humbly the discipline of the Lord; that if the Lord would be gracious to teach me, I would not be rebellious to the things of the Lord.

We represent the things of Christ to our own and what we do must be done well in the home and must be done appropriately or correctly or in a manner that fits the person, glory, and the majesty of Jesus Christ our Lord. The elder needs to manage his household well—not efficiently, but in a manner that fulfills himself, fulfills the family, and fulfills God’s will for what God has placed that man to be.

For you men here who are husbands, I would have to ask you: Would the Lord look upon you today and say that you are indeed a good husband? Again, it's not just a list of whether you provide a certain income or if your wife and kids can afford these things because the Lord does not care about such trivial things. Does He not own the universe? Is He interested in how much you can give into the offering basket? Why would He care how much you make? Would the Lord look up on you and say that that man is a good husband, a good father spiritually? Because that is the litmus test.

For our part as men, we need to make sure that we are doing what we do in our families out of a sense of devotion to the Lord, devotion to our wives, and devotion to our children. And may I emphasize, *in that order*. It's so easy for us to mix that up and all of a sudden, the kids go before anything. That is sin. Why is that sin? Because we start to upset the concept of what is most precious given to us.

The most precious thing to us as husbands is our wives. Your kids are an incredible blessing and you should delight in them, but the greatest gift you will ever give them is a stable relationship between husband and wife. There's not one among us that doesn't know that the most secure sense we get as young children is when mom and dad love each other and when it seems like mom and dad doesn't love each other, there is no greater sense of insecurity in our lives.

In that order: our God, our spouse, and then our children. If we do that with devotion, if we do that in a manner appropriate to God's will for us, then it can be truly said of us that he **"manages his household well."** Not by my standards, not by the world's standards, but by God's standard, as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures. He is an excellent husband. He is an excellent father.

"... keeping his children under control with all dignity."

We can talk about the parallel of our roles in fatherhood as representing the Fatherhood of God Himself; that an overseer stands before his children and helps them to control themselves or to keep themselves under submission with all dignity.

George W. Knight in his commentary, *The Pastoral Epistles*, mentioned how it's not about us putting our children under our thumb or putting them under our submission, forcing them to submit to us, but teaching them by our example and by our discipline to understand that it is worth being in submission to a man such as ourselves. We need to have a manner of ministry to our children that they would fall under our control or under our submission to us with dignity.

The term **"dignity"** is *semnotēs* (σεμνότης) which means "with some sense of gravity, some sense of significance that they would take things seriously." Our children ought to see that in us. That would display to others that we understand what it means to shepherd. Would you want your shepherd to be a man who doesn't know how to take care of his wife, is mean to his kids, and his kids are in rebellion all the time? Do you want that in the elder who is supposed to disciple you and give you advice and counsel and pray for you and help you along the course of the Christian life? That would be weird.

Paul in asks **"if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?"** In other words, if he is not capable of caring for his own, he can't shepherd outside of his own. There is no greater place of sanctification (all the men will agree with this); there is no greater challenge to your sanctification, than when you got married. Not because our wives are so awful, I mean our wives can probably say the same thing. There is no greater challenge to sanctification in your life, no greater hurdle, no greater difficulties for sanctification and growing in the things of Christ than after you got married.

For those of you who don't have children yet, when you have children, then that is just an added dimension on top of that. It requires a giving up of one's self. It requires for us to sacrificially love, to be patient, to learn to shepherd and to do that in a manner that is genuine and real, not just on paper; and not to rely on statistics (e.g. Don't I do this and this? You ought to give me some slack and give me some room because I want to do my own thing for a while).

"... how will he take care of the church of God?"

That term for **"take care"** in the Greek is *epimeleomai* (ἐπιμελέομαι) which is an interesting word. It only occurs in one other place in the New Testament in [Luke 10:34-35](#). It's used in the later end of the story of the Good Samaritan. Remember how the Lord talks about what it means to be someone's neighbor? In giving them a parable about it, He instructs them and tells them that there's this man on the road to Jericho and he gets jumped by thieves and left for dead. Then, all these different individuals (who are Jews) pass on by and they think he's dead. They don't want to touch him because if he's dead they will be ceremonially unclean, so they just walk on by. A Samaritan (whom the Jews hated and vice versa) comes and sees him in his plight. He puts him on his donkey, bandages his wounds and takes care of him. That's where the term is used.

In fact, let me read to you [Luke 10:34-35](#) where it uses that term:

"and [the man] came to him, and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return, I will repay you.'"

If you guys recall, one denarius is a full day's wage. In other words, he took two days worth of wages and left it for the innkeeper and was willing to be on record that he was going to repay anything else used to care for this stranger, this otherwise enemy of his people. He took care of him.

How will he take care of the church of God, the gathered community of saints if he's not careful enough to care for his own? He cannot take care of God's church. We go from the household, in particular, to the house of God. He cannot physically minister. He cannot do these things that are required of him if he cannot do it in his own home. It just makes sense. There ought to be an elder this sense of servant leadership; that he knows how to lead not with a fist, but with his heart.

J. Oswald Sanders would say that he is tough-skinned—he can take criticism—and he is tender-hearted. He's very compassionate. He is strong where he needs to be strong and sensitive where he needs to be sensitive. He stands in the gap for his people. He is a servant leader. Not for himself. That is one thing that is the most difficult to constantly divorce ourselves from, that is this idea that leadership means prominence; that leadership means you have succeeded. Perhaps, in the world we would say yes. If you rise in corporate ranks and become a CEO, I would say, yes, you are the chief in that work place. You have accomplished great things and that's great.

But in the church, there's no such thing. There's no added prominence necessarily. There *is* added responsibility, certainly. And there is a requirement of God that we would give ourselves more and more, not just to watch ourselves and our doctrine carefully, but to minister in such a way that would bring others into the clarity of their faith and the glory of Jesus Christ.

In [Mark 10:45](#), Jesus says:

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

That's one of the central verses, if not *the* central verse in the Gospel of Mark. The reason is Mark portrays Jesus as the suffering Servant which he borrows from Isaiah the prophet. Remember how Isaiah talked about the Messiah that would be beaten and by His stripes we would be healed; that He is the One that is so tender-hearted that He would never snap off the bruised reed? These are wonderful things that Isaiah talked about and Mark took Isaiah's terminology of the suffering Servant and applied it to Him in his gospel.

If there was ever a human being that had a right to say "I have arrived" or "Listen, I'm at the restaurant and as soon as I walk in I want everyone to clap. Just stand up in full applause. I expect that of you because I am the most prominent thing in the universe." If there were ever an individual that could say that, it would be Jesus Christ, the Son of God. God, very God who dwelt among us. Yet, He says when He came, what did He come for? Not to be served!

The greatest sin a husband or a father can display on a day-to-day basis is laziness and gluttony. Sitting in front of the TV and asking their wives to hurry up with their meal, telling their kids to hurry up and do this and get out of their way. To become "lord of their house" and be proud of that is the most sinful and diabolical thing you can do to your children, to your wife, and to your church! I'm certain of that. Why? Because if we have an example from the Lord, Himself, who said, "I didn't come to be served. I came here to serve." If you want to know to what extent the service should go, He says *"and to give my life a ransom for many."*

Christ came to pay the price not just for those that are less deserving, but for His very enemies. Does this idea not fit the same attitude that we saw in the parable of the Good Samaritan? He takes care of those who don't deserve his care. That is what the elder ought to be. How can he manage or take care of the church of God? Do they deserve it? Not always, but nevertheless, he needs to take care of them and he can only do it if he's already experienced in it with the management of his own home and the management of his own life.

The implication is simple: If you can't manage your house, you can't care for the church of God. This is the measure of a man. Then, you might think "Well, I don't know if I'll ever be an elder." That's alright. The call is not for you to make yourself turn into an elder. That's not the intent of this portion of scripture. Instead, it is to tell you that this is the measure of a man of God. Not what he knows, not what his reputation is, but how he ministers; what he does, who he is in his family with his spouse.

Listen, if he can hit a fast ball, if he can make a fire, if he can fix his car, and he can do all these things that we consider masculine like survive in the forest for a week with just a buck knife, these are great and excellent things, but they in themselves do not accomplish anything spiritually.

[Hebrews 13:17](#) says:

"Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."

Who is held accountable for the spiritual well-being of every single person in this room? I am. Gary is. Dave is. And anyone who is an elder or pastor of a congregation. They are held to account to watch over those souls. That is a precious and ominous responsibility and you cannot do it if you do not know how to do the most basic things and that is, raise up in respect and reverence and in the fear of the Lord those that are the closest to you.

The godly household is a preeminent qualification and a goal. It is one of those things that we should say “That’s something I aspire to have.” To be a man of God, by way of a husband or by way of a father (should the Lord be so gracious), is not an aspiration for only those who if you want to become an elder. They are absolute desires for everyone who call themselves a child of God.

Second Practical Qualification of an Overseer (1 Timothy 3:6)

“and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside *the church*, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

The second qualification that comes with some amount of consequence is this issue of spiritual maturity. Curiously, verse 6 and 7 both have as a consequence something to do with Satan. That shouldn’t make us real comfortable. It should make us think “Okay, these are kind of important things because they have something to do with judgment, either by Satan or upon him.”

“and not a new convert...”

The qualification requires that he is not a neophyte. You know “neo” means “new” and “phyte” as in a “phylum.” The word for “**new convert**” in the Greek is *neophytos* (νεόφυτος). In its literal use, it means “a shoot that is recently planted” or a newly planted thing. Metaphorically, it is the idea that it is someone who has become new to the things of Christ. In other words, someone that is young in faith. Should that individual be placed in a position of leadership? Clearly, it says here that he should not. Don’t lay your hands on someone too early. Be careful about him. Don’t allow him to be a new convert.

J. Oswald Sanders in *Spiritual Leadership* says this:

“Maturity is exhibited in magnanimity of spirit and breadth of outlook. Paul’s encounter with Christ transformed him from a narrow-minded bigot into the most magnanimous of men. The indwelling of Christ enlarged his heart and broadened his horizons, yet his breath of outlook did not lead him to abandon his convictions.”

What I like about what he’s saying there is that as we become more mature, we tend basically to be more conversant with stuff to where we’re not so black and white about everything. We’re not extreme about everything.

The first time something happens in your life—you panic. I remember the first time I learned to drive a car. In that first year, at 16 years old, I got into two accidents in one weekend. Not a good sign. But because I knocked that off early (see, you guys think that was a bad thing) every time I got into an accident it was no big deal. “Sorry, I ran into you. Here’s my information.” It broadens your perspective a little bit.

And that’s true in the experiences of life. When we encounter some things, God allows us, in His infinite wisdom, in that experience to broaden our horizons a little bit. I like what J. Oswald Sanders says. He says certainly maturity is exhibited in this widening, this magnanimity of sorts, and yet at the same time, in the breath of his outlook, does not lead him to abandon his convictions. That is that delicate tension and balance that a mature believer actually has to juggle well.

He has to balance that tension between being broad, magnanimous, and gracious with the kind of thinking that says “Hey listen, if you call on the name of Christ, I don’t care what you believe. Let us through joined hands and weep together, howl like dogs, and do whatever we need to do and enjoy each other.” He doesn’t go that far. At the same time, he doesn’t say “Well, you call yourself a Christian, but you’re not at my church so you’re not a *real* Christian.” He doesn’t give you that narrowness, nor is he so wide-open theologically that he accepts things without discernment and carefulness.

The mark of the spiritually mature is, according to J. Oswald Sanders, that he is wide-open in terms of understanding of life, but he is nevertheless a man driven by conviction. That is a difficult tension to balance but that is a good demonstration of explaining spiritual maturity.

A neophyte or a new believer is does not have that kind of experience. He is still formulating his convictions. He is still trying to understand some of these things. There’s still stuff he needs to know by way of experience, as well as by way of doctrine and teaching. It’s all theoretical to him. A young believer, who is not even dating yet, thinks “Okay, I’m going to become an excellent husband” and he starts dating someone and he starts to realize that when he is actually in a relationship that it’s a lot more difficult than he thought. This isn’t just fun and games. It isn’t “I’ll sweep her off her feet and she will forever want to serve me and enjoy my company.”

We grow into this wisdom of understanding that relationships are not “just all about me.” How much more so once you’re married, once you have kids, etc. The idea is that a new convert may know the theory of stuff, he may have memorized a ton of verses, but he still needs to know what doctrine means as it is fleshed out. He needs to experience what it means to be a man that has grown into the things of the Lord.

“... lest he become conceited...”

He needs to be seasoned so that he himself will not become **“conceited.”** This is an interesting word, *tuphoō* (τυφῶω), which means “to be puffed up with smoke.” A.T. Robertson said that it’s to “live in a smoke screen”—this fog of delusion that is your pride. Pride is one of those things that if we haven’t been thinking about, then we have allowed some measure of sin into our lives this week. Why? Listen, it’s not a question of do I have pride. It’s a question of where it is now. If we are under the impression that because I’m not prideful in this thing, that I’m not a prideful individual. You are absolutely mistaken.

Charles Spurgeon once told a story about how he had preached a sermon and afterwards this lady came up to him, who has been in his congregation a long time, and said “Mr. Spurgeon, I just want you to know that I pray for you; that you would be a humble man.” And he said “I thank you for that. I will pray the same for you.” She says “I don’t have anything to be prideful about. So you don’t need to pray that for me.” He basically told her “Well, there is such an incredible sense of pride in you that you definitely need my prayers concerning that.” Spurgeon corrected her sense of that.

Pride is one of those things that we will always struggle with. We are always prideful. Nothing is more difficult for us to kill than that smoke screen of pride. He may become conceited—a young man placed in a position of authority. He may not see that as a place of ministry and of servant leadership. He may see that as a position, as an accomplishment, a means of success and arrival. To appoint someone like that would be the wrong thing for any congregation to do because now you have encouraged this individual to basically cultivate this sense of pride in himself; this conceit in himself. And certainly all manners of evil will enter his heart and his life because of it.

We can go on endlessly. We can do a whole series on the issue of pride. No question that that is one of the most difficult things we struggle with, but let me direct you this way. Humility is much needed as any leader, but humility is not accidental. You don’t just go through your Christian life and say “I’m just going to become a humble person one day. I know it. I’m not worried about it.” How will you get there? Humility doesn’t just grow into you. You don’t just say “Oh, I’m a humble man now.” It doesn’t happen like that.

Part of our sanctification is that we need to ferret out every issue of pride. We need to seek out the Lord and ask “Lord, am I a humble man in these things?” We need to examine ourselves and our hearts constantly. Success in one area does not guarantee success in another. Humility is something we need to fight for, that we need to pray for, that we need to be careful about.

If you want to pray for your pastors pray that the Lord will humble them and keep them humble. It’s also excellent to pray that they would preach better. That’s okay. But more importantly, you should pray for his character and you should delight to pray for your leaders, for me, and for other leaders in the church—that they would be humble men because that would delight the Lord.

Why can’t he be a neophyte? Because the consequence is prideful conceit. We can’t have that. We need to be all the more mindful that we seek after that which is most important—humble service.

Someone once told John Bunyan that he had preached a delightful sermon. John Bunyan replied “You’re too late.” The man looked at him confused. John Bunyan said “The devil told me that as soon as I finished.” What he’s trying to say is that there is a desire in us, even for men in the pulpit, to easily hear what Satan would like us to hear most—that we are good. There needs to be that constant vigilance. And even in that vigilance, you will miss a thing or two. We need to ferret out every instance of pride.

“... and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.”

The idea is that this is what should be the judgment, the condemnation for the devil, himself. If you want to talk about someone who is prideful, there is none as prideful as Satan, himself—the Morning Star. Lucifer means “the bright star.” He was brilliant, beautiful, and excellent, probably the pinnacle of all the angelic beings. That he would desire to attain more and desire to take the very glory of God, that’s insane to me. Nevertheless, that’s what the Scriptures suggest to us—that an individual, a living thing can become so prideful that he would dare to try to usurp the glory of God. That’s what pride does to us.

What was the great sin in the Garden? Just one act of disobedience? Because he ate of a fruit? No. When you read it, you realize that at the point Eve says “it looks good to eat” and thinks it’s not bad to become like unto God (and they both eat of the forbidden fruit), they were desirous to have a little bit more than they had which was to be a god themselves. We think “Well, it’s just an apple.” The issue was not what they did, but that they did it so that they might become like unto God.

Idolatry and pride is always co-mingled. They live happily together. They are a married couple and they both encompass our hearts and have made a good home in us. We need to be careful not to fall into such pride unto condemnation that we join the devil in his judgment. That’s not a small statement, not an insignificant thing for the Lord to say. The Word of God says that if a young believer is placed into the position of an elder too early and he demonstrates pride, then such a conceit would incur the wrath of God as only Satan should deserve. That is a bold and stern warning to us.

Third Practical Qualification of an Overseer (1 Timothy 3:7)

“and he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

Look at the difference between verse 6 and 7. The previous verse states that if were to become prideful in the office of an overseer, we might fall into the same condemnation that is incurred by the devil and join in his judgment. Now in verse 7, it says if you do not have a good reputation outside the church you fall into the reproach and the trap that the devil sets for you. In other words, pride is so bad that it would incur us to be alongside Satan in punishment, but to have a bad reputation or what we might call hypocrisy is to fall into the trap that Satan has left for us.

I think it's interesting that Scripture is saying that if we do not have a good reputation that that is apparently the trap that Satan would have us fall into. Simply, there's no greater delight for Satan than for a church leader to fall into some ill repute because that shakes the foundation of the church.

It would be the same if you are talking about a family unit. Consider a wonderful family that loves the Lord (or they seem like they are supposed to love the Lord) when the husband runs away with another woman that family is left in shambles. Likewise, when the men that lead the church disqualify themselves, it leaves the Church in shambles.

“and he must have a good reputation with those outside the church...”

This term **“good reputation”** or ***kalos marturia*** (καλὸς μαρτυρία) literally means “a beautiful testimony” or “a beautiful reputation or witness.” The idea is that he lives in such a way that he's not necessarily the most popular guy with all of his neighbors or coworkers, but that he lives in such a manner that displays the beauty of his testimony of his relationship with God. Do people know of you?

In Romans 2:23-24, Paul rails against Israel:

*“You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? For **“THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU,”** just as it is written.”*

Paul says to the Jews that when they break the Law, they dishonor God. When reading through the Old Testament (after the Abrahamic Covenant), there is this sense, this theme which God had desired the nations (i.e. Gentiles) to look upon Israel and recognize the graciousness and greatness of God. That's why they had so many dietary restrictions, why they lived differently from everyone else. They had particular laws that were to separate them from the other nations. Not to be better than them or their enemies. No. But so they could live in a manner that would cause the rest of the world to see that there was something to their God. It was to be a display of God's glory in the Old Testament and you notice that God when He is blasphemed, that's when He brings the nations (e.g. Assyria, Babylon) to judge Israel, at least for a period of time. It is when His own nation, God's own people, bring ill-repute to God's holy name that His reputation is stained among the nations.

Living in the New Testament era, we are to have a good reputation with those outside the church. Satan would love to see hypocrisy run amuck among us. Our testimony ought to speak to all those around us that at least there is something good about the things of the Lord, even if they are unwilling to submit to it, even if they hate the concept of God; that they would tolerate Christianity and not see it as a bad thing. There's something noble about it and that's how it should be.

“...so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

The word picture here is of Satan being this crafty hunter, setting up this snare, this trap for us. It is an easy one for us to fall into. What's the point of us being considered exemplary individuals of the church if everyone outside the church knows that we are just the opposite? Why would we live as Mr. Two-Face or who John Bunyan in *Pilgrim's Progress* calls “Mr. Facing Both Ways”?

One of the most ridiculous things that God ever created is the chameleon. That creature is insane. We are not to be like that. We are not to hedge our bets. We are not to be of the world and then, be of the things of the Lord. In fact, God categorically denies that anyone who is of a two-faced nature can be a child of God. For us to realize that in any area we demonstrate hypocrisy, we tarnish the reputation of Christ, His church, His glory, and that is exactly what the devil would want us to do—that is one thing that all leaders must avoid.

Remember how we said last week that there are some things that are worse than dying? This is one of them. Why did so many martyrs die over the course of Christian persecution? Some of them could have been saved by just throwing a pinch of incense into the altar of Zeus or some other god. That could've saved their lives. But this very act, in the eyes of those Romans who were gathered around, would have deplored such action. It would destroy the reputation of the Church.

Those brave Christians could not defame the name and reputation of God by a singular act of doing *anything* they considered worship to a false idol. For that determination, they were thrown into the Coliseum to be mauled by lions and bears as entertainment. They were cut down by gladiators. They were burned and crucified—all manner of evil was committed against those to whom the Lord accounted as having greater worth than anyone else in the world. It's because

there are some things that are worse than dying; and the reputation of Christ and the Church ought to be one of those things.

We cannot have hypocrisy in our church; cannot have hypocrisy in our leadership. Why? Because that would soil the reputation of God, Himself. How will the world understand how precious is the holiness of God? How precious is God's design for us? How precious is the Lord, Himself, the Creator of all things? How will they believe it if we ourselves don't believe it? If we don't live in a manner that demonstrates that such things are true? We need to have a beautiful reputation with those outside the church.

Concluding Remarks

When you take all three of these qualities into account, you realize that there is a strong and practical sense of these particular qualifications.

- An overseer is one who manages his household well, meaning that he does it in a manner that the Lord would delight in;
- An overseer is a man that knows to be careful not to be immature and fall into conceit and pride;
- And an overseer is one that is all the more careful about having a beautiful witness or reputation among unbelievers so that he may display the character of God and our commitment to God.

Do you know what happened because of the Neronian persecution? The cause of Christ spread and took over the world. Why? Those who gathered in the Coliseum to watch these dumb Christians die and be tortured, to be mutilated, realized that they lived for such a conviction of life that they were willing to die shamefully and in extraordinarily heinous ways. And for the reputation of what and for whom? Is He that precious? Obviously, He is that precious.

How many missionary stories have you read? How many were martyred so that the gospel would be presentable to people? If God is gracious to those who murdered those who are most precious to the Lord, they will start to realize that there's a conviction in those they killed. Something will stir in them and in their conscience, a desire to know what it is that is so valuable that Christians would give up their lives for it. It is the reputation of God. It is so that God might be right, even if everything else is wrong. We would lose our lives instead of soiling His reputation. He must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he doesn't fall into the reproach and the snare of the devil.

All of this brings us back to why we need to know what the qualifications for an overseer are; it is not just to pinpoint who an elder ought to be in our congregation—that is important and good, but even more than that—that we might be able to examine ourselves and see if we exemplify these spiritual virtues.

All of these concepts are not separate ideas just for the elder and the pastor. These qualities are given to us throughout the Scriptures as what we ought to be. Is it only the leaders of the church that are called to be humble? No. It's all of us. Is it only the leaders of the church that are called to be excellent and fulfill the role God has given to them for their families, their marriage relationships? For wives being in submission to their husbands, husbands leading their wives and dying for them? Are these things just for the elders and the leaders? No. It's for all of us. Is the reputation outside the church just for leaders to be concerned with? No. It's everyone's concern.

When you consider those things then this is not just a list for you to kind of look at and say "One day, I will turn into that." It should be your ambition. It should be something for you to pray about. Not just for your leaders and future leaders of the church, but for your children, for all those that you care for in the family of Christ, and most importantly, for yourself.

All of us should have a desire to aspire to such a maturity that we would display the full glory of our Lord in all things in our lives. That's what we should live for. It's not just a list. It's a manner by which we might understand what it means to be mature and practically living out the things of Christ. Let's commit our way to prayer.

Heavenly Father,

We come before You and thank You that You give us the Word of God and its instruction and design for us.

We ask that You would through the power of the Holy Spirit, that He would bring to remembrance certain things from the Word of God.

We may forget some of the illustrations and some of the things that are a means of human communication, but let those things, Lord, be applied to ourselves in our lives.

May each one of us examine ourselves to see if we are maturing in the things of the Lord.

Teach us not to be satisfied, Lord, with just what has happened in the past. Teach us not to be satisfied because at some point we made some decision or had some prayer or some experience.

Instead, Lord, help us only to be satisfied to be living only for You today and living in a manner that is more acceptable and more gracious and more closely associated with exactly what You would desire for us to be.

We give you the praise because You are worthy of all praise. We ask that we would be careful not to rob Your glory, but to give You glory in all things.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen*