

# Qualified Overseers

*An Exegetical Study of the Qualifications of an Elder*



*“This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work” (1 Timothy 3:1)*

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# **Dedication**

This booklet is dedicated to one of the finest men I've ever met in my life, Jim Booth of Zion, Illinois. Jim served as an elder of the Zion congregation before I moved here in 1993. He is a man of character and integrity, and he is the very definition of the word "gentleman." As a Bible student he has few equals. His Bible class books on Daniel and Revelation give evidence of his lifetime devotion to a study of the Scriptures. His example as a husband, father, grandfather and elder will live on for many years after he has completed his earthly walk.

# Bible Translations Used

ASV	American Standard Version (1901)
BARCLAY	A New Translation, William Barclay (1969)
CEV	The Contemporary English Version (1995)
CJB	The Complete Jewish Bible (1998)
ERV	The English Revised Version (1885)
ESV	Holy Bible: English Standard Version (2011)
GOODSPEED	The Bible, An American Translation, Edgar J. Goodspeed (1923)
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible (2003)
KJV	King James Version (1611, 1769)
MOFFATT	A New Translation, James Moffatt (1913)
MOULTON	The Modern Reader's Bible, Richard G. Moulton (1907)
NABR	New American Bible with Revised New Testament (1970)
NASV	New American Standard Bible (1995)
NET	New English Translation (2005)
NIV	Holy Bible: New International Version (2011)
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible (1990)
NKJV	New King James Version (1982)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (1989)
REB	The Revised English Bible (1989)
RSV	Revised Standard Version (1971)
TEV	Today's English Version (1996; renamed the Good News Translation in 2001)
YLT	Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible, Robert Young (1862)
WEYMOUTH	The New Testament in Modern Speech, R.F. Weymouth (1938)
WUEST	The New Testament, An Expanded Translation, Kenneth Wuest (1961)

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# The Elder And His Family

## Introduction

- I. The apostle Paul left the young preacher Titus on the island of Crete so that he could “set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city” (Titus 1:5).
  - A. In the early church older men known as *elders* (bishops, overseers, shepherds) were given the task of overseeing a local congregation and insuring that the flock was fed and the wolves kept away.
  - B. The character, virtues, and qualifications for those appointed to serve as elders was not left up to the wisdom of Titus.
  - C. The qualifications for elders were given by inspiration (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:6–9).
    1. God has always had qualifications for those who would lead His people.
    2. Jethro gave advice to Moses concerning the moral character of those who would serve as judges in Israel (Exod 18:19–21).
  - D. If we throw out *just one* qualification for a man to serve as an elder, we might as well throw all of the qualifications out.
    1. The Mormon Church is well known for their eighteen-year-old “elders.”
    2. The Presbyterian Church (USA) began ordaining women elders in 1930.
    3. The United Methodist Church has been ordaining women as elders and preachers since 1956 in the United States.
- II. Paul hoped that godly men would aspire to leadership within a congregation (1 Tim 3:1).
  - A. At the same time, an overwhelming desire for this position is reason for automatic disqualification.
  - B. Such ambition indicates that a man does not understand either the job or what will be required personally and professionally.
  - C. A man must *desire* the work of an elder enough to be willing to make the sacrifices necessary to meet the qualifications.
- III. Many of the qualifications for elders begin long before the man is of proper age.
  - A. In fact, most of the qualifications for an elder are the same qualities and virtues that should be found in the life of every child of God.
  - B. This series of lessons is designed to help *young* men prepare for eldership.
  - C. Many sermons on the eldership are preached twenty years too late.
  - D. The wives of younger men need to listen so they may help their husbands develop the qualities needed—for no man is qualified to be an elder without a faithful wife.
  - E. Older members of the congregation need to listen so you will know what the qualifications are and so you too can help these men develop spiritually.
- IV. One responsibility given to elders is that of being *examples* to flock (1 Pet 5:1–4).
  - A. “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow...” (Heb 13:7).
    1. The word *follow* (Gr. *mimēomai*) means “imitate, follow another’s example” (Newman, *A Concise Greek–English Dictionary of the New Testament*).
    2. In both word and deed, disciples are admonished to imitate in behavior the faith of those who oversee them, and elders are to lead lives worthy of imitation.
    3. Elders need to be examples in family life, worship, and attendance.
    4. A man can’t shepherd the flock by proxy—those appointed as elders need to be present at every worship service.

- B. One figure of speech used to describe the *work* of elders in a local congregation is that of a *shepherd* (Gr. *poimainō*) (Acts 20:28).
  - 1. The metaphor of a sheepfold appears often in Scripture (Ps 100:3; Isa 40:11; Jer 23:2; Ezek 34:12–16; Zech 10:3; 11:4–17; John 10:1–18; 21:15–17; 1 Pet 2:25; 5:2).
  - 2. With shepherds there is no *driving*, but constant *leading* (cf. John 10:1–4).
  - 3. The shepherd’s voice never directed the sheep to follow to a path which the shepherd himself did not tread—but even if it did, the sheep would follow the shepherd himself.
  - 4. Good shepherds know that there is a difference between *leading* the flock and just barking orders.
- V. Elders and deacons are to “first be tested” (1 Tim 3:10).
  - A. This *testing* (Gr. *dokimazō*) does not imply a formal examination, but it is a reference to the general judgment of the congregation as to whether they fulfill the conditions detailed by Paul.
  - B. The home is the first testing ground for godly character (1 Tim 3:5).
    - 1. Sometimes brethren sum up the qualifications for an elder as, “He must be married and have children who were baptized.”
    - 2. This is certainly true, but there is *far* more involved in it than that.
  - C. In this lesson we want to notice the qualifications that deal with the elder’s family.
    - 1. Most of the quotations of the Bible in this series will be from the New King James Version of the Bible (NKJV).
    - 2. However, we will be comparing the NKJV with over 20 other Bible translations to help us gain a better insight to and appreciation for these qualifications.

### Discussion

## I. The Husband Of One Wife

- A. There has been much discussion as to whether a divorced man or widower could serve as an elder (1 Tim 3:2).
  - 1. The vast majority of translations, including the KJV, NKJV, RSV, ESV, REB, ASV, NET, and NASV simply read, “the husband of one wife.”
  - 2. However, the NRSV, NABR, MOFFATT and BARCLAY specify “married only once” (as opposed to “one at a time”).
  - 3. In like manner, GOODSPEED renders this as “only once married.”
  - 4. The TEV says, “he must have only one wife.”
  - 5. WUEST translates this as, “a one-wife kind of a man [that is, married only once].”
  - 6. “The standard here for elders is extraordinarily high. But not in the way it is so often misinterpreted. The common misinterpretation is *quantitative*—that he can have had only one wife. Thus, if he had been divorced or widowed and remarried he could not be an elder. The moral loophole in this quantitative interpretation is that a man can be married to only one woman his whole life and not be a one-woman man. It allows moral rationalization—such as we see on the nightly news, even from the highest office in our nation. The correct sense here is not quantitative but *qualitative*. The man is truly a one-woman man. There are no other women in his life. He is totally faithful. He does not flirt. There are no dalliances.” (Hughes and Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 80)

7. “Now, to consider the meaning of the words, ‘the husband of one wife.’ The Greek is *mias* (one) *gunaikos* (woman) *andra* (man). The word ‘man’ is not *anthrōpos*, the generic term for man, but *anēr*, the term used of a male individual of the human race. The other two words are in the genitive case, while *anēr* is in the accusative. The literal translation is, ‘a man of one woman.’ The words, when used of the marriage relation come to mean, ‘a husband of one wife.’ The two nouns are without the definite article, which construction emphasizes character or nature. The entire context is one in which the character of the bishop is being discussed. Thus, one can translate, ‘a one-wife sort of a husband,’ or ‘a one-woman sort of a man.’ We speak of the Airedale as a one-man dog. We mean by that, that it is his nature to become attached to only one man, his master. Since character is emphasized by the Greek construction, the bishop should be a man who loves only one woman as his wife. It should be his nature to thus isolate and centralize his love.” (Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 53)
- B. The wife of an elder must also have a character that is above reproach (1 Tim 3:11).
1. “Having discussed some personal qualities, Paul turns to the candidate’s home life and spells out what should characterize that part of his life. His wife is to be dignified, he is to be faithful to his wife, and his children and household are to be governed well (vv 11–12). These verses are somewhat parallel to the same stipulations for overseers in the previous paragraph, although there Paul does not raise the topic of the overseer’s wife.” (Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 203)
  2. Their wives are to be *reverent* (Gr. *semnos*).
    - a) “Worthy of respect” (HCSB, NIV), “dignified” (ESV, NAS, NAB), “serious” (NRSV, CEV), “sober-minded” (WEYMOUTH), “of good character” (TEV).
    - b) The KJV renders this as “grave.”
    - c) The word suggests a woman of good and honorable character.
    - d) “The word ‘grave’ is the translation of *semnos*, the same word used of the deacons (v. 8). It speaks of that combination of gravity and dignity which invites the reverence of others.” (Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 53)
  3. They must not be *slanderers* (Gr. *diabolos*).
    - a) “Original meaning of *diabolos* (from *diaballō*, Luke 16:1), the devil being the chief slanderer (Eph. 6:11). ‘She-devils’ in reality (Titus 2:3).” (Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*)
    - b) They must not be “malicious talkers” (NIV), “malicious gossips” (NAS), or “scandalmongers” (REB).
    - c) “She cannot be a *διαβολος*, ‘slanderer,’ a problem that was prevalent among the Ephesian women, some of whom are characterized as going about from house to house, learning to be idlers and gossips (1 Tim 5:13; on the word cf. 3:7). Just as her husband cannot be a gossip (*διλγογος*; 3:8), neither can she.” (Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 204)
    - d) Unfortunately, many men who desire to serve as an elder become disqualified at this point—their wives render them unqualified.
    - e) On many occasions the elder will have private information about others that needs to remain private—things he cannot even share with his wife.

4. They must be *temperate* (Gr. *nēphalios*).
  - a) Most translations use the word “temperate” which speaks of self-control.
  - b) However, some simply render this word as “self-controlled” (HCSB), or “sober-minded” (ESV).
  - c) The KJV and the NJB use the word “sober.”
5. They must be *faithful* in all things (Gr. *pistos*).
  - a) The word suggests one who is absolutely and completely trustworthy.
  - b) They are to be “faithful in every respect” (NET) and “wholly reliable” (NJB).

## II. Ruling His Own House Well

- A. A man’s ability to manage his own family is a fair indication of his ability to care for the church of God (1 Tim 3:4-5).
  1. An important aspect of managing one’s family is making sure that the children behave properly.
  2. The word *rule* (Gr. *proistēmi*) was a military term which means “to superintend, to preside over.”
  3. Primarily the meaning of *rule* is to *govern* or *manage* the house.
  4. Most translations use the phrase “*manage* his own household well” (HCSB, ESV, NIV, NAS, NRSV, RSV, CJB).
  5. “Paul demanded that the church leader be exemplary in controlling his own family. He was to raise children known for their obedience and morally upright behavior. The verb for ‘manage’ carries the idea of governing, leading, and giving direction to the family. The same Greek word appears in 1 Thess 5:12 (‘are over you’) and 1 Tim 5:17 (‘direct’) and also in v. 5 (‘manage’). The term demands an effective exercise of authority bolstered by a character of integrity and sensitive compassion. Its use in v. 5 with the verb ‘take care of’ defines the quality of leadership as related more to showing mercy than to delivering ultimatums. For the father to see ‘that his children obey him’ does not demand excessive force or sternness. It demands primarily a character and manner of discipline that develop a natural respect. ‘Either the children show respect for their father or the meaning is that his character and demeanor call it forth... This is not the martinet’s paradise but is the Christian home, in which the husband exercises love, as the context in Ephesians shows.” (Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 112)
- B. Some men who desire to be elders totally fail here because they are never home.
  1. It is impossible to bring children up in “the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph 6:4) if you are not home—and this charge was given to fathers.
  2. Many men have neglected their children and left their upbringing to their wife.
  3. This is the type of example we do not need—we can see neglect all around us.



- C. Elders must “rule their own house *well*”—not just getting by.
1. The word *well* (Gr. *kalōs*) pertains “to meeting relatively high standards of excellence or expectation, *fitly, appropriately, in the right way, splendidly*” (Bauer et al., *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 505).
  2. The godly elder is to be an example in the matter of managing their home.
  3. Young men need to learn this lesson now!
  4. Eli, once high priest in Israel, was judged with death “because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them” (1 Sam 3:13).

### III. The Elder And His Children

- A. “Having his children *in submission* with all reverence” (1 Tim 3:4).
1. The word *submission* (Gr. *hypotagē*) is translated as “under control” (HCSB), while the NJB says that he “brings his children up to obey him.”
  2. He is to be in control of his children at *home*: this would involve the chores he assigns his children, control of the TV and Internet, making sure his children are at home at a proper hour, and setting a proper bedtime.
  3. He is to be in control of his children at *school*: his children are to be obedient even when they are away from home.
  4. He is to be in control of his children at *worship* services: his children are to listen and not distract others—they are to learn to worship God, not improve their skills at playing games on an iPad.
  5. “The word ‘children’ (plural of Gk. *teknon*) would apply only to children living at home and still under their father’s authority” (Dennis and Grudem, *The ESV Study Bible*).
- B. “Having his children in submission *with all reverence*” (1 Tim 3:4).
1. The word *reverence* (Gr. *semnotēs*) suggests the idea of the elder keeping his dignity, honor, and respect as he disciplines his children.
    - a) “...having his children under control with all dignity” (HCSB).
    - b) “...with all dignity keeping his children submissive” (ESV).
    - c) “...keep his children in control without losing his dignity” (NET).
  2. This reverence and dignity rules out shouting matches with his children.
  3. “The Greek phrase rendered with proper respect (*meta pasēs semnotētos*) involves an element of dignity, yet without sternness. It is important for a leader to command the respect of his children as well as commanding the respect of others.” (Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 96–97)
  4. Children are to obey because “this is right” (Eph 6:1), not because of the physical threats made by their father.
  5. You can often tell whether children respect their father by how they answer him.
- C. “*Faithful* children not accused of dissipation or insubordination” (Titus 1:6).
1. Paul does not use the word *Christian* but the word *faithful* (Gr. *pistos*).
  2. This involves more than just showing up and filling a pew.

- D. These children are not be “accused of *dissipation* or *insubordination*” (Titus 1:6).
1. *Dissipation* (Gr. *asōtia*) suggests “debauchery” (NRSV) or “wild” (CJB) behavior.
  2. *Insubordination* (Gr. *anupotaktos*) suggests “rebellious” (NRSV), or “stubborn self-will” (WEYMOUTH).
- E. Can a man with only one child serve as an elder?
1. The word “children” is sometimes used when only one child is under consideration.
  2. For example, if someone were to ask, “Do you have any children?” you would say, “Yes” even if you only had one child.
  3. “The Bible sometimes uses the plural for the singular and the singular for the plural. Several examples may be cited. In Genesis 8:4 the ark is said to have rested upon the ‘mountains’ (plural) of Ararat, yet we know that the ark could not have come to rest but upon one mountain. In Genesis 19:29 it is said that God destroyed the ‘cities’ in which Lot dwelt, but he dwelt in only one, Sodom. In Genesis 21:7 Sarah asked, ‘Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck?’ We know that Sarah had only one child. In Genesis 46:7 Jacob took his family into Egypt, among whom were his ‘daughters’ (plural), yet we know he had only one daughter—Dinah. In Jeremiah 6:16 the prophet speaks of the ‘old paths’ (plural), but we know there is only one way. Sometimes the singular is put for the plural in the Bible. In Genesis 1:20 the writer speaks of moving creature and fowl (singular) but he has reference to all creatures and fowls that had been created. In Deuteronomy 7:20 the Lord will send the ‘hornet’ (singular) as punishment to certain ones. In Joshua 24:12 he sent the hornet. In referring back to Exodus 23:28 we see that it was ‘hornets’ (plural). So the singular was put for the plural.” (Philips, *Scriptural Elders and Deacons*, 146–147)
- F. “For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?” (1 Tim 3:5).
1. Paul asserts most emphatically that if a man does not know how to manage his own house well he is incompetent to lead the church of God.
  2. Men with a poor home life would subject the church to the ridicule of the community and the disdain of God.
  3. The potential ability in a larger setting can be indicated only by similar skill in a lesser setting (Matt 25:14–30).
  4. The words of the wise man still ring true today, “My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him who reproaches me” (Prov 27:11).

#### *Conclusion*

- I. Preparations for the eldership need to start while men are still young.
- II. Use wisdom and discretion in choosing a mate (Prov 31:10–31, esp. vs. 23).
- III. Let God’s written word be the guide book for raising your children.

# The Elder And His Reputation

## Introduction

- I. We are in a series of lessons dealing with the *elders* in a local congregation of God's people—the shepherds of the flock (Acts 20:17, 28).
- II. The qualifications for elders were given by inspiration (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).
- III. In our first lesson we studied those qualifications which dealt with the elder's family.
  - A. They were to be the husband of one wife (1 Tim 3:2).
  - B. They were to have wives who are reverent, not gossips—they are to be temperate, and faithful in all things (1 Tim 3:11).
  - C. They were men who ruled their own house well (1 Tim 3:4).
  - D. They had their children in submission with all reverence (1 Tim 3:4).
  - E. These were to be faithful children, not accused of being profligates (Titus 1:6).
  - F. The reason given for these qualifications was stated by Paul: "If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (1 Tim 3:5).
- IV. Many of the qualities of good elders are developed in one's youth.
  - A. Men often talk about what they are going to do for the Lord *after* they retire.
  - B. However, the quality traits found in a faithful elder are developed in their younger years, and then brought to maturity as they get older.
  - C. In this lesson we want to look at the elder and his reputation in the community.

## Discussion

### I. An Elder Must Be Blameless

- A. Three times we are told that elders must be blameless (1 Tim 3:2; cf. Titus 1:6-7).
- B. The word *blameless* (Gr. *anepilēptos*) is most often translated as "above reproach" (HCSB, ESV, NIV, NAS, RSV, NRSV, CJB, GOODSPEED, MOFFATT).
- C. WEYMOUTH translates it as "a man of irreproachable character," while the NJB renders this as "impeccable character," and the TEV reads "without fault."
- D. Blameless is defined as "without reproach: one who cannot be laid hold of: who gives no ground for accusation" (Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, 4:29).
  1. "...affording nothing that an adversary could use as the basis for an accusation" (Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, 403).
  2. "The word 'blameless' is *anepilambanō*, made up of *lambanō*, 'to take,' and *epi*, 'upon'; thus, the compound means 'to lay hold upon,' and all this is stated in the negative by having prefixed to it the letter, Alpha, making the entire word mean, 'one who cannot be laid hold upon.' That is, a bishop must be of such a spotless character that no one can lay hold upon anything in his life which would be of such a nature as to cast reproach upon the cause of the Lord Jesus. He presents to the world at large such a Christian life that he furnishes no grounds for accusation." (Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 52-53)
  3. "The first trait mentioned is that the bishop should be *above reproach*. This does not mean that he should be sinless, but that his conduct and actions should be seen by the congregation as blameless (TEV 'without fault')." (Arichea and Hatton, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letters to Timothy and Titus*)

- E. In the days of His flesh, our Lord was blameless (Luke 20:20–26).
  1. He could even say, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” (John 8:46).
  2. No shame or embarrassment must be brought upon the church by the conduct of the elders.
  3. There is to be no irregular conduct in their business or social life.

## II. The Elder And His Temperament

- A. If he does his job well, he will have frequent occasions which will try his patience.
  1. Even under provocation he must not lash out, either by words or fists.
  2. Unless he is well supplied with self-control, he will become ill-tempered.
  3. Self-control is a part of the fruit of the Spirit, and all Christians are to exhibit it in their lives (Gal 5:23; 2 Pet 1:6).
- B. A godly elder is “not violent” (1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7).
  1. The idea of *not violent* (Gr. *plēktēs*) suggests a man who is not pugnacious, contentious, or quarrelsome.
  2. Most translations simply render this as “not violent” (NKJV, ESV, NRSV, NET).
  3. Sometimes translators emphasize the outward manifestations of being “not violent” by using such phrases as “no striker” (KJV, ASV, YNG), or “nor given to blows” (WEYMOUTH), or that he must not “get into fights” (CJB), or that he is “no brawler” (MOULTON), nor “pugnacious” (GOODSPEED, NAS).
  4. Other translations dwell more on his demeanor by using such phrases as “not a bully” (HCSB), or that he is not to be “hot-tempered” (NJB).
- C. He is “not quarrelsome” (1 Tim 3:3).
  1. *Not quarrelsome* (Gr. *amachos*) means one who is “not disposed to fight; not quarrelsome or contentious” (Mounce, *Mounce Concise Greek–English Dictionary of the New Testament*).
  2. The majority of translations follow the NKJV and use the phrase “not quarrelsome” (HCSB, ESV, NIV, NRSV, RSV, WEYMOUTH).
  3. The NASV uses the word “peaceable,” while YNG, NABR, and ERV translate it as “not contentious.”
  4. The quarrelsome man is one who is always finding fault—he can’t disagree with someone without becoming defensive.
  5. The only other time this word is found in the New Testament is in Titus 3:2, where it is translated as “peaceable.”
- D. He is “not quick tempered” (Titus 1:7).
  1. *Quick-tempered* (Gr. *orgilos*) suggests a man who is prone to anger, and this word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament.
  2. While most translations use the phrase “quick-tempered” (NKJV, ESV, NIV, NRSV, CEV, RSV, CJB, TEV, GOODSPEED), others say that the elder is not to be “hot-tempered” (HCSB, NJB, MOFFATT).
  3. The KJV reads “not soon angry.”
  4. Anger itself is not wrong, for Paul said, “Be angry, and sin not” (Eph 4:26–27).
  5. Jesus was angry, but He never lost His self-control (Mark 3:5).
    - a) He never lashed out when His pride was insulted or His ego assaulted.
    - b) Some people confuse temper tantrums for righteous indignation.
  6. How would an elder react if he was publicly rebuked? (1 Tim 5:19–20).

### III. The Elder And His Money

- A. An elder is to be one who is “not greedy for money” (Titus 1:7).
1. *Greedy for money* (Gr. *aischrokerdēs*) describes the man who is willing and eager to accept dishonorable gain and includes not only the love of money, but questionable means of getting it.
  2. This phrase is translated in a great variety of ways: “not greedy for money” (NKJV, HCSB); “not fond of sordid gain” (NAS); “dishonest in business” (CEV); “no money-grubber” (REB); “not avaricious” (NJB); and “not greedy of filthy lucre” (MOULTON, ASV, ERV).
  3. WUEST says, “not eager for base gain,” while BARCLAY expands the thought with “he must not be a seeker of gain in disgraceful ways.”
  4. The word *greedy* also includes those who thirst for power.
- B. “Elders must not be *seekers of gain in disgraceful ways*. The word is *aischrokerdēs*, and it describes people who do not care how they make money as long as they make it. It so happens that this was a fault for which the Cretans were notorious. The Greek historian Polybius said: ‘They are so given to making gain in disgraceful and acquisitive ways that among the Cretans alone of all men no gain is counted disgraceful.’ Plutarch said that they stuck to money like bees to honey. The Cretans counted material gain far above honesty and honor. They did not care how much their money cost them; but every Christian knows that there are some things which cost too much. Anyone whose only aim in life is to amass material things, irrespective of how that is achieved, is not fit to be an office-bearer of the Christian Church.” (Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, 267)
- C. “Such a person will have a detachment from wealth and its distractions. He will be an example of generosity and faithful dependence on God. His goals and decisions will not be influenced by paychecks and benefits. Instead, a pastor has only one devotion, one treasure—God himself: ‘No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money’ (Matt. 6:24).” (Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 185)
- D. The *Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament* omits the phrase “not greedy for money” in 1 Timothy 3:3 since it is not found in any of the earliest manuscripts of the Greek New Testament (but it is found in the *Textus Receptus*, upon which the KJV was based, and in the *Byzantine/Majority Text* compiled by Dr. Maurice A. Robinson).
- E. No faithful Christian can be a lover of money (1 Tim 6:6–10).
1. When a person serves money, they cannot serve God (Matt 6:24).
  2. I do not see any way possible for an elder to be involved in some occupations: liquor store worker, some clubs, and maybe even holding political office.

## IV. Not Given To Wine

- A. We are told the elder is to be one who is “not given to wine” (1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7).
1. The phrase “not given to wine” (Gr. *paroinon*) is ambiguous at best, but that is the way several older translations render this word (KJV, NKJV, YNG) or by the phrase “not given to drink” (REB, GOODSPEED).
  2. Equally ambiguous is the phrase “not a brawler” (ERV, ASV, MOULTON).
  3. The Greek word for “given to wine” (πάρουινος) is defined as “one who is given to drinking too much wine, *addicted to wine, drunken*” (Bauer et al., *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 780).
  4. The vast majority of translations make it plain that the elder is not to be a “drunkard” (ESV, RSV, NABR, NET, TEV, MOFFATT), “heavy drinker” (CEV, NJB), “addicted to wine” (HCSB, NAS, NRSV, WUEST), “drink excessively” (CJB), or be a “hard drinker” (WEYMOUTH).
- B. Wine (which would include both fermented and unfermented grape juice) was used in Bible times as both a beverage and as a medicine.
1. When used as a medicine, it was used both internally and externally.
    - a) The good Samaritan poured oil and wine on the wounded man (Luke 10:34).
    - b) Timothy was told to take a little wine for his infirmities (1 Tim 5:23).
  2. Old Testament priests were prohibited from drinking wine when performing their duties (Lev 10:9).
  3. Those under a Nazirite vow could not drink wine (Num 6:3).
  4. Kings were to abstain from drinking because it could dull their senses and affect their judgment (Prov 31:4).
- C. “While it is true that wine ‘makes man’s heart glad’ (Ps. 104:15), it also has the potential for great harm. That is why it was commonly diluted with water in biblical times. Even so, it retained its potential for harm to those who drank it unmixed or to excess. Proverbs 20:1 warns, ‘Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.’” (MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 104–105)
- D. “A bishop must not be a *drunkard*, which is the opposite of sobriety in the previous verse. Drunkenness was one of the vices of ancient society. *Drunkard* may also be expressed as ‘addicted to wine (or, alcoholic beverages),’ ‘drinks too much wine,’ or ‘drinks wine to excess.’ Wine came from the juice of grapes. Sometimes the juice was served in an unfermented state, but generally it was allowed to ferment. In situations where safe drinking water was scarce if not absent altogether, wine became the common ordinary drink. Drinking a moderate amount of wine would not make a person drunk; drunkenness is caused by excessive drinking. That is why in many parts of the Bible there is teaching against drinking too much wine rather than about abstinence from wine altogether. In certain cultures today, however, where wine is unknown, it will be necessary to employ a general word for ‘strong drink’ or ‘strong alcoholic beverage’ rather than a specific fermented beverage made from grapes. In some cultures palm wine will be the closest natural equivalent.” (Archea and Hatton, *A Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letters to Timothy and Titus*)

- E. “Elders must not be *given to drunken and outrageous conduct*. The word is *paroinos*, which literally means *given to overindulgence in wine*. But the word widened its meaning until it came to describe all conduct which is outrageous. The Jews, for instance, used it of the conduct of Jews who married Midianite women; the Christians used it of the conduct of those who crucified Christ. It describes the character of someone who, even in sober moments, acts with the outrageousness of a drunk.” (Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, 266)

## V. Having A Good Testimony Among Those Who Are Outside

- A. An elder must have “a good *testimony* among those who are outside” (1 Tim 3:7).
1. The word *testimony* (Gr. *marturia*) means, “in an ethical sense, of testimony concerning one’s character” (Thayer, *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament*).
  2. The word is further described as an “attestation of character or behavior, *testimony, statement of approval*” (Bauer et al., *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 619).
- B. Different versions of the Bible vary widely on how this phrase is translated.
1. “He must have a good report of them which are without” (KJV).
  2. “A good testimony” (NKJV, YLT, ASV, RV, MOULTON).
  3. “A good reputation” (HCSB, NIV, NASB, NABR, REB, MOFFATT).
  4. “Well thought of” (ESV, RSV, NRSV, NET) or “well regarded by outsiders” (CJB).
  5. “Held in good repute by outsiders” (NJB).
  6. “Well-respected by people who are not followers” (CEV).
  7. “He should be a man who is respected by the people outside the church” (TEV).
  8. “It is needful also that he bear a good character with people outside the Church” (WEYMOUTH).
  9. BARCLAY renders this as, “He must have earned the respect of those outside the Church,” while GOODSPEED gives us, “He must also be a man of good standing with outsiders.”
  10. WUEST, in his expanded translation, says, “Moreover, it is a necessity in the nature of the case for him also to be having an excellent testimony from those on the outside.”
- C. “A final qualification of the candidate for the episcopal office is that *he must be well thought of by outsiders*. *Outsiders* are most probably non-Christians, hence TEV ‘people outside the church.’ The conduct of the bishop should be such that even those who do not belong to the believing community cannot help but be impressed by his irreproachable behavior. Many languages will restructure this clause; for example, ‘Also people who do not believe in Jesus should respect (or, think well of) him,’ or even idiomatically as in many Asian languages, ‘he should have much face before those who are outsiders (or, do not believe in Jesus).’” (Archea and Hatton, *A Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letters to Timothy and Titus*)
- D. “He must be a man who has gained the respect of others in the day-to-day business of life. Nothing has hurt the Church more than the sight of people who are active in it but whose business and social life contradicts the faith which they claim and the principles which they teach. The Christian office-bearer must first of all be a good person.” (Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, 83)

- E. There are some things a man can do at a young age that will scar him for life.
1. My father used to tell me, “Never trust a draft dodger.”
  2. How do you view those who commit adultery break their wedding vows—vows that were made in God’s Own presence?
  3. The Bible teaches that a person can repent and bring forth fruits worthy of repentance (Matt 3:8).
  4. However, repentance must be accompanied by *evidence* the world cannot question (Acts 19:18–20).

*Conclusion*

- I. Every Christian is to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt 5:13–16).
- II. A good name takes years to establish and only moments to destroy.



# The Elder And His Character

## Introduction

- I. In our first lesson in this series we discussed the elder and his *family*.
  - A. He is to be the husband of one wife (1 Tim 3:2).
  - B. His wife is to be reverent, not a gossip, but temperate, and faithful (1 Tim 3:11).
  - C. He is to rule his own house well (1 Tim 3:4).
  - D. His children are to be in submission with all reverence (1 Tim 3:4).
  - E. They are to be faithful children, not accused of being profligates (Titus 1:6).
  - F. One who can't manage his own house well is not competent to be an elder and shepherd the church of our Lord (1 Tim 3:5).
- II. In our second lesson we looked at the elder and his *reputation*.
  - A. He must be blameless in character (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6-7).
  - B. His temperament...
    1. "Not violent" (1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7).
    2. "Not quarrelsome" (1 Tim 3:3).
    3. "Not soon angry" (Titus 1:7).
  - C. He cannot be greedy for money (Titus 1:7).
  - D. He is not one who is given to wine (1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7).
  - E. He is to have a good report among those who are outside (1 Tim 3:7).
- III. In this lesson, we want to look at the *inward qualities* or *character* of an elder.
  - A. Your *reputation* is what other people think of you—your *character* is what your wife knows you are.
  - B. Most of these qualities are developed early in life (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

## Discussion

### I. The Inward Qualities Of A Godly Man

- A. An elder must be "temperate" (1 Tim 3:2).
  1. *Temperate* (Gr. *nēphalios*) suggests a man who is sober (figuratively), circumspect and who exercises self-control.
  2. The vast majority of English translations prefer the word "temperate" (NIV, NAS, NRSV, ASV, RSV, CJB, NABR, REB, NET, NJB, ERV, WEYMOUTH, GOODSPEED, MOFFATT, MOULTON).
  3. However, other translations render this word as "self-controlled" (HCSB, CEV, TEV), "vigilant" (KJV, YLT), or "sober-minded" (ESV).
  4. "The reference is to the clarity and self-control necessary for sacred ministry in God's work. The distinction from Philo and Jos. is that the use here is figurative, though with a hint of the literal sense which does not come through so well in translation." (Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 4:941)
  5. "In N.T. the meaning of the verb is always metaphorical, *to be calm, dispassionate, and circumspect*" (Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, 4:229).

6. “*Temperate* (TEV ‘sober’) translates a word that generally means abstaining from wine or strong drink. While it can have that sense here, it is more likely that it is used here in a metaphorical sense to describe conduct that is free from any form of excess, particularly in moral and spiritual matters.” (Arichea and Hatton, *A Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letters to Timothy and Titus*)
  7. This is a man who can control his words, temper and recreation.
- B. An elder is to be a man “of good behavior” (1 Tim 3:2).
1. The phrase *good behavior* (Gr. *kosmios*) suggests a man who is dignified, courteous, honest and respectable.
  2. The word is often translated as “respectable” by modern translations (HCSB, ESV, NIV, NASV, NRSV, NET).
  3. Other translations render this as “well-behaved” (CEV, WEYMOUTH), “decent” (YLT), “orderly” (ASV, CJB, ERV, TEV, MOULTON), “dignified” (RSV), “courteous” (NABR, REB), “a man of good behavior” (GOODSPEED), or “unruffled” (MOFFATT).
  4. “*Kosmios* means *orderly, honest, respectful*. In Greek, it has two special usages. It is common in tributes and in inscriptions to the dead. And it is commonly used to describe the person who is a good citizen. Plato defines the man who is *kosmios* as ‘the citizen who is quiet in the land, who duly fulfills in his place and order the duties which are incumbent upon him as such’. This word has more in it than simply good behavior. It describes the person whose life is beautiful and in whose character all things are harmoniously integrated.” (Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, 90–91)
- C. An elder is to be “sober-minded” (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8).
1. The phrase *sober-minded* (Gr. *sōfrōn*) suggests one who is self-controlled, temperate and prudent.
  2. Highly favored among the older translations is the phrase “sober-minded” (ASV, ERV, WEYMOUTH, GOODSPEED), or simply “sober” (KJV, YLT).
  3. Many of the newer translations prefer the word “sensible” (HCSB, NRSV, CEV, RSV, GOODSPEED).
  4. Other translations uses words like “self-controlled” (ESV, NIV, CJB, NABR, NET), “prudent” (NASV), “temperate” (REB), “discreet” (NJB), or “master of himself” (MOFFATT).
  5. “Basically it means ‘of sound mind, sane, in one’s senses,’ and then ‘curbing one’s desires and impulses, self-controlled, temperate” (Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament*).
  6. Thayer defines this word as “a. *of sound mind, sane, in one’s senses...* b. *curbing one’s desires and impulses, self-controlled, temperate*” (Thayer, *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament*).
- D. Elders are to be “gentle” (1 Tim 3:3).
1. The word *gentle* (Gr. *epieikēs*) suggests a man who is “equitable, fair, mild, gentle” (Thayer, *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament*).
  2. The vast majority of English translations of the Bible prefer the word “gentle” (NKJV, HCSB, ESV, NIV, NAS, NRSV, CEV, TEV, YLT, ASV, RSV, CJB, NABR, NET, NJB, ERV, BARCLAY, MOULTON).

3. However, the REB renders this as “a forbearing disposition,” while WEYMOUTH gives us “not selfish,” and the KJV uses the word “patient.”
  4. MOFFATT renders this as “lenient,” and WUEST says, “sweetly reasonable.”
- E. An elder is to be “just” (Titus 1:8).
1. The word *just* (Gr. *dikaios*) suggests a man who is morally upright in his dealings with others and one who is fair, impartial, and unbiased.
  2. Translators are almost evenly divided between using the word “just” (KJV, NAS, ASV, NABR, REB, ERV, BARCLAY, MOFFATT, MOULTON, WUEST) and the word “upright” (ESV, NIV, NRSV, RSV, NET, NJB, TEV, WEYMOUTH, GOODSPEED).
  3. A minor variation are the words “righteous” (HCSB, YLT) and “uprightness” (CJB).
  4. This is a man who will do “nothing with partiality” (1 Tim 5:21).
- F. An elder is to be “holy” (Titus 1:8).
1. The word “holy” (Gr. *hosios*) suggests a pious and devout individual.
  2. It is with rare exception this word is translated in any way other than “holy.”
  3. However, a few translations prefer the word “devout” (NAS, NRSV, REB, NET, NJB).
  4. WEYMOUTH prefers the word “saintly,” while MOFFATT renders this as “a religious man,” BARCLAY gives the word “pious,” and GOODSPEED tells us he is to be a man “of holy life.”
  5. The return of our Lord should motivate all of us to lead holy lives (1 Pet 1:13–16).
- G. An elder is to be a man who is “self-controlled” (Titus 1:8).
1. *Self-controlled* (Gr. *engkratēs*) suggests a man who is self-disciplined.
  2. It is with rare exception that this word is translated in any way but as “self-controlled.”
  3. However, a few translations prefer the word “temperate” (KJV, ERV, MOULTON) or the word “disciplined” (ESV, NIV, TEV).
  4. MOFFATT uses the word “abstemious” which suggests a life marked by restraint.
  5. “N.T.∞. Originally, having power over; possessed of; hence, controlling, keeping in hand” (Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, 4:334).
  6. “*Self-controlled* translates a word that is derived from the verb that means ‘to exercise self-control’ or ‘to have self-discipline,’ especially in relation to sinful desires.” (Arichea and Hatton, *A Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letters to Timothy and Titus*).
- H. An elder must not be “self-willed” (Titus 1:7).
1. *Self-willed* (Gr. *authadēs*) suggests a man who is “self-pleasing, self-willed, arrogant” (Thayer, *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament*).
  2. Many translations use the word “self-willed” (KJV, NKJV, NAS, ASV, CJB, ERV, WUEST, MOULTON) or “arrogant” (HCSB, ESV, NRSV, RSV, NABR, NET, NJB, GOODSPEED), while two translations use the word “overbearing” (NIV, REB).
  3. BARCLAY gives us the phrase “obstinately self-willed,” while the CEV tells us he must “not be bossy,” and WEYMOUTH says he must not be “over-fond of having his own way.”
  4. MOFFATT uses the word “presumptuous” to suggest a man who is too confident.
  5. “The man thus obstinately maintaining his own opinion, or asserting his own rights, is reckless of the rights, feelings and interests of others” (Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, 350).

6. No one admires a self-willed individual—they are a source of discord and wars.
7. Elders are not “lords” over the congregation (1 Pet 5:3).
  - a) The eldership is a joint office held with other men.
  - b) A man who is self-willed will not be able to work with his fellow elders, or the deacons and preachers of the word.
8. “An overbearing disposition comes from arrogance or insecurity, resulting in a domineering, despotic manner of leadership which crushes the spirit and extinguishes the gifts and abilities of others. Leadership by control quickly divides a group into factions and arguments, taking away the spirit of unity and cooperation.” (Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 343)
9. “Clearly, the person who is *authadēs* is an unpleasant character. People like that are intolerant, condemning everything that they cannot understand and thinking that there is no way of doing anything except their way. Such a quality, as W. Lock said in his commentary, ‘is fatal to the rule of free men’. No one who shows contemptuous and arrogant intolerance is fit to be an office-bearer of the Church.” (Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, 265–266)

## II. His Treatment Of Others

- A. An elder is to be a “lover of what is good” (Titus 1:8).
  1. This phrase (Gr. *philagathos*) suggests a man who loves goodness itself (and this is the only time in the New Testament this word is found).
  2. Most translations of the Bible suggest that this man is a lover of what is good, or is fond of that which is good (or goodness itself).
  3. Those who love goodness will encourage it in others and goodness will be found in his own life.
  4. “‘Love for what is good’ describes the leader generally as one inclined to pursue things and people that are virtuous, inherently good. It was traditionally contrasted with self-love, and in the Wisdom tradition it was one of the many facets of wisdom. As Paul applies the term, and its opposites (2 Tim 3:2, 3), the presence and practice of this selfless quality could stand as a demonstration of faith (just as it marked the person out as honorable within secular society), while its absence betrayed not only the selfish unbeliever but also the false teacher as a pagan...” (Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 689)
- B. An elder must be “hospitable” (Titus 1:8; 1 Tim 3:2).
  1. *Hospitable* (Gr. *philoxenos*) suggests one who provides food and lodging for strangers—this does not mean the elder is to be the social director of the church.
  2. While most translations of the Bible simply use the word “hospitable,” WEYMOUTH expands this a little by using the phrase “hospitable to strangers.”
  3. “An elder must be hospitable. The Greek is *philoxenos*, which literally means *a lover of strangers*. In the ancient world, there were a great many who were constantly on the move. Inns were notoriously expensive, dirty and immoral; and it was essential that Christian travelers should find an open door within the Christian community. To this day, no one needs Christian fellowship more than the stranger in an unfamiliar place.” (Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, 268)

4. “‘Hospitality’ referred literally to taking in trustworthy travelers as guests. Such hospitality was a universal virtue, but because inns in antiquity usually functioned also as brothels, Jewish people in the Diaspora were especially willing to take in fellow Jewish travelers, as long as the travelers bore letters of recommendation certifying their trustworthiness.” (Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 612–613)
5. “The word **hospitable** means ‘open to strangers.’ It reflects a vulnerability to others, a desire to care for guests and those in need. Hospitality was highly valued by the Mediterranean cultures where there were few inns and those which existed were often disreputable. But having fancy hotels and fast-food restaurants does not relieve any of us from this call to hospitality. All believers are instructed to practice hospitality (Rom. 12:13). Even if our guests do not require a bed or a meal, we should provide them with a warm and accepting atmosphere—a place of refuge.” (Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 183–184)
6. “Hospitality, like most of these qualities, was a practice required of all believers in general, which leaders were to exemplify. Within Hellenistic culture, the hospitable householder was esteemed, and practicing hospitality was a matter of honor. Given the dangers of travel in the empire and the economic uncertainties faced by many believers, the early Christian mission and churches depended upon those who would open their homes and share their goods. It seems to be an assumption that overseers were often also householders (vv. 4–5), so it is natural that the church should look to them to model this virtue.” (Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 253)
7. Early Christians were often admonished to extend hospitality to strangers.
  - a) “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels” (Heb 13:2).
  - b) They were to be “given to hospitality” (Rom 12:13).
  - c) “Be hospitable to one another without grumbling” (1 Pet 4:9).
  - d) “Dear friend, you are showing faithfulness by whatever you do for the brothers, especially when they are *strangers*” (3 John 5–8 HCSB).

#### Conclusion

- I. All of the characteristics of elders that we discussed today are to be in the lives of *every* Christian (2 Pet 1:5–7).
- II. Elders must not only have these qualities, but exemplify them (1 Pet 5:3).

# The Elder And His Work

## Introduction

- I. In our first lesson in this series we discussed the elder and his *family*.
  - A. He is to be the husband of one wife.
  - B. His wife is to be reverent, not a gossip, but temperate and faithful.
  - C. He is to rule his own house well.
  - D. His children are to be in submission with all reverence.
  - E. They are to be faithful children, not accused of being profligates.
  - F. One who can't manage his own house well is not competent to shepherd the church of our Lord (1 Tim 3:5).
- II. In our second lesson we looked at the elder and his *reputation*.
  - A. He must be blameless in character.
  - B. His temperament proves him to be a man who is “not violent,” “not quarrelsome” and “not soon angry.”
  - C. He cannot be greedy for money or one who is given to wine.
  - D. He is to have a good report among those who are outside.
- III. In our third lesson we looked at the elder and his *character*.
  - A. His inward qualities prove him to be temperate (exercising self-control), a man of good behavior (dignified, honest, and respectable), sober-minded (temperate and prudent), gentle (equitable and fair), just (morally upright), holy, self-controlled (self-disciplined), and not self-willed (arrogant or overbearing).
  - B. As far as his treatment of others, he is to be a “lover of what is good” and a man “given to hospitality.”
- IV. In this lesson we want to look at the *work* of elders in a congregation.
  - A. Some of their work can be seen in the qualifications (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).
  - B. In previous lessons we studied these qualifications by examining the Greek words in these passages and noticing how they were translated in 24 versions of the Bible.
  - C. We will continue this process today by examining the words used to describe the work of elders—and then comparing different Bible translations to see how different groups of translators understood these words and phrases.

## Discussion

### I. Elders Must Be Capable Teachers

- A. An elder must be “able to teach” (1 Tim 3:2).
  1. The phrase *apt to teach* is only one word in the original text (Gr. *didaktikos*) and means “apt and skillful in teaching” (Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*).
  2. Most translations of the Bible simply use the phrase “able to teach” (NKJV, ESV, NAS, CEV, CJB, NABR, TEV, GOODSPEED) or “an able teacher” (HCSB, NET) or, “apt to teach” (KJV, ASV, YLT, ERV, MOULTON).
  3. A few translations use the phrase “a good teacher” (REB, NJB), while others render it as “a skilled teacher” (MOULTON, WUEST).
  4. WEYMOUTH gives us “a gift for teaching,” while BARCLAY suggests he must be a man who is “possessed of an aptitude for teaching.”

5. Where there is no learning, there is no teaching.
  6. “The fifth virtue is the ability to teach (*an apt teacher*), accenting the function of a bishop as one who is able both to teach true doctrine and to refute false teachings. This term is used again in 2 Tim 2:24. Another way of saying this is ‘able to teach the believers well.’” (Arichea and Hatton, *A Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letters to Timothy and Titus*)
  7. “Likewise he **must** also be **able to teach**. This is the one item in the list that also implies duties, a matter that will become clear in 5:17. This adjective recurs in 2 Timothy 2:24 and Titus 1:9, whose contexts suggest that **able to teach** means the ability both to teach the truth and to refute error.” (Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 81)
- B. He must “hold fast” the faithful word (Titus 1:9).
1. “The qualification of being ‘an apt teacher’ in 1 Tim 3:2 is expanded here into a description of the teaching ministry that the elder is expected to perform. This teaching role is in three parts: faithfulness to the true message, competence in teaching it to others, and ability to refute those who oppose it.” (Arichea and Hatton, *A Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letters to Timothy and Titus*)
  2. The phrase *hold fast* (Gr. *antechomai*) means “to hold firmly, cling or adhere to; to be devoted to any one” (Mounce, *Mounce Concise Greek–English Dictionary of the New Testament*).
  3. Notice the way a few translations render the first part of this verse:
    - a) “He must have a firm grasp of the word” (NRSV).
    - b) “They must stick to the true message they were taught” (CEV).
    - c) “With a strong grip on the truly reliable message” (BARCLAY).
    - d) “Standing by the message that can be relied on” (GOODSPEED).
  4. I’ve known men who think they are “elder material,” yet they can’t even name the books of Bible!
  5. “Having described the personal qualities of a person fit for church leadership, Paul finished with one more necessity. The leader **must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught**. Those who presume to lead must embrace the traditional teachings which came through Christ and the apostles. Leaders must not come from among those who flirt with new doctrines. Not only must their behavior be open to observable goodness; they must also remain unwavering in their commitment to the faithful message of truth. Paul offered two reasons for this requirement in leaders. First, dedication to the true gospel message would qualify them to **encourage others by sound doctrine**. Only truth brings change, encouragement, and actual spiritual development. False teachings can offer only temporary gratification or intrigue. They can never satisfy. Secondly, knowledge and adherence to sound doctrine will equip a person to **refute those who oppose it**. False teachings, human inventions and philosophies create confusion and bring destruction upon the thinking and faith of many.” (Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 344–345)

- C. An elder must be able to “exhort” others (Titus 1:9).
1. The word *exhort* (Gr. *parakaleō*) means to encourage or build up others.
  2. Most translations use the word “exhort” or “exhorting” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, CJB, NABR, NAS, YLT, ERV, WUEST, MOULTON), while the NET gives us the phrase “give exhortation.”
  3. I prefer the word “encourage” (HCSB, NIV, WEYMOUTH, BARCLAY, GOODSPEED), or the phrase “giving encouragement” (NJB).
  4. Three translations render this as “give instruction” (ESV, RSV, MOFFATT), and one as “help others” (CEV).
  5. For reasons I cannot explain, the REB renders the word as, “*appeal* to his hearers” and the NRSV gives us, “that he may be able both to *preach with sound doctrine* and to refute those who contradict it.”
  6. The written and revealed word of God is able to give us comfort (1 Thess 4:18).
- D. An elder must also be able to “convict those who contradict” (Titus 1:9).
1. The basic meaning of the word *convict* (Gr. *elegchō*) is “correction, reproof, censure” (Thayer, *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament*).
  2. I believe our English word “refute” best represents the meaning of the word in this context, and that is how many translations render it (HCSB, CJB, NIV, REB, NAS, NRSV).
  3. Several of the older translations prefer the word “convict” (ASV, YLT, ERV, BARCLAY, MOULTON).
  4. Other translations use words such as: “rebuke” (ESV, NABR), “refute” (MOFFATT), “refuting” (NJB), “confute” (RSV), “convicting” (WUEST), “convince” (KJV), “correct” (NET, CEV), “reply successfully” (WEYMOUTH), or “show the error” (GOODSPEED).
  5. One of the purposes of elders is to shut the mouths of false teachers—and proficiency with the written word will enable them to so act (Titus 1:10–11).
  6. An elder is to be able to do this refuting of false teachers himself, not just ask a preacher to do so!
  7. “The second doctrinal function of the elder is that he ‘refute those who oppose it’ (i.e., ‘the trustworthy message’). The Greek verb employed here, *elegchein*, suggests an educative dimension in confronting false teachers who contradict the gospel message. The goal of the refutation of false teaching is not to destroy the opponent but rather to restore him to ‘sound doctrine.’ This necessarily implies that the false teaching to which Paul referred was coming from *within* the church, i.e., from those who professed Christian faith. Such a situation would also require that the elder be courageous in his willingness to confront a so-called Christian brother.” (Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 286–287)



- E. An elder’s teaching role within a congregation is one of the many reasons that they are not to be “novices” (1 Tim 3:6).
1. The word *novice* (Gr. *neofuton*) means “newly planted” and in this context implies a new convert to Christ.
  2. Most translations of the Bible speak of the man as not being a “new covert” (HCSB, NAS, NJB, YLT, WEYMOUTH, WUEST, GOODSPEED, MOFFATT), or a “recent convert” (ESV, NIV, RSV, NABR, REB, NRSV, NET, BARCLAY), or a “novice” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, ERV, MOULTON).
  3. One translation prefers the phrase “new believer” (CJB), and another the words “new followers” (CEV).
  4. “He must not be a recent convert. The Greek word is the source of the English word ‘neophyte’; literally it means ‘newly planted’ and is used here figuratively to refer to new believers. TEV captures the meaning in a positive manner, ‘he must be mature in the faith,’ and one may also express this as ‘he must have believed in Jesus for a long time,’ or ‘he must have been a Christian for a long time,’ or even ‘he must believe strongly in Jesus.’ However, in many languages RSV’s model will be the more natural way to translate this clause; for example, ‘he must not be a person who has only recently believed in Jesus.’” (Arichea and Hatton, *A Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letters to Timothy and Titus*)
  5. “The overseer must not be ‘a recent convert’ (KJV, ‘a novice’). The Greek word (only here in the NT) is *neophytos* (‘neophyte’) an adjective that literally means ‘newly planted.’ Here it is used metaphorically, as a substantive, for a new convert. The reason for this prohibition is spelled out in the rest of the verse. There is danger that such a person might ‘become conceited.’ This is the verb *typhoo* (only here and in 6:4; 2Tim 3:4). It comes from *typhos*, ‘smoke,’ and so literally means to ‘wrap in smoke.’ But in the NT it is always used metaphorically in the passive in the sense of being ‘puffed up’ with pride.” (Earle, *1 Timothy*)
  6. We must remember that it is possible for one to have been a believer for many years and still be considered a “babe in Christ” (Heb 5:12–14).

## II. The Elder Is A Steward Of God

- A. An elder is a “steward” for God (Titus 1:7).
1. In New Testament times a *steward* (Gr. *oikonomos*) watched over “the management of a household or of household affairs; specifically, the management, oversight, administration, of others’ property; the office of a manager or overseer, stewardship” (Thayer, *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament*).
  2. Most translations use the word “steward” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, RSV, ESV, NABR, REB, NAS, YLT, NRSV, WEYMOUTH, MOFFATT, MOULTON).
  3. The CJB gives us “entrusted with God’s affairs,” while the NIV gives us “manages God’s household,” and the NET gives us “entrusted with God’s work.”
  4. WUEST and GOODSPEED use the word “superintendent.”
  5. The CEV renders this as “in charge of God’s work,” while the HCSB gives us the word “administrator” and BARCLAY uses the word “oversees.”

6. “Steward’ is *oikonomos*, made up of *oikos*, ‘house,’ and *nomos*, ‘law,’ hence, the law whereby a household is administered or governed. The word refers to a manager of a household, a superintendent. Into such a person’s hands is entrusted the responsibility to properly administer the affairs of the household. The bishop is given the responsibility of properly administering the affairs of the local church.” (Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 184)
  7. The word *steward* is also used in Luke 16:1-4.
    - a) In the New Testament age it was not uncommon for wealthy landowners to have stewards to oversee or manage their estates—these stewards could be slaves or free persons.
    - b) “The rich man here may be an absentee landlord and the servant his estate manager (*oikonomos*). This situation was common in Galilee, with its large landed estates and many peasant tenant farmers (see 20:9-19). Managers of this kind had significant financial and administrative authority.” (Strauss, *Matthew, Mark, Luke*, 450)
- B. Elders are to “watch out” for the souls of believers (Heb 13:17).
1. The phrase *watch out* (Gr. *agrupneō*) means “to be sleepless, keep awake, watch... to exercise constant vigilance over something” (Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*).
  2. I have know of some “shepherds” to sleep during worship services—these men are a disgrace and ought to resign in shame!
  3. Of course, men who spend worship services playing with children or catching up on their email are no better.
  4. Distracted shepherds are unfit to “take care of” the house of God (1 Tim 3:5).
- C. “Shepherd the church of God” (Acts 20:28).
1. The word *shepherd* (Gr. *poimainō*) means to “to feed, to tend a flock, keep sheep” (Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*).
  2. It appears that most translators prefer using the word “shepherd” (NKJV, HCSB, CJB, NIV, REB, NASB, NRSV, NET, CEV, BARCLAY, GOODSPEED, MOFFATT, WEYMOUTH), “shepherding” (WUEST), or the word “feed” (KJV, ASV, NJB, YLT, ERV, MOULTON).
  3. However, some translations use the phrase “to care for” (RSV, ESV) and one prefers “tend” (NABR).
  4. A shepherd is to *keep* the flock from straying (Heb 13:17).
  5. A shepherd is to *lead* the flock to water and pasture (1 Pet 5:2).
  6. A shepherd is to *protect* the flock from all danger (Acts 20:29-30).
  7. The primary function of an elder is not to watch over the money or take care of business, but to “watch for your souls” (Heb 13:17).
- D. Elders are “bishops” or “overseers” of the congregation (1 Tim 3:1; cf. Acts 20:28).
1. The word which is translated as “bishop” (Gr. *episkopos*) in some translations (KJV, ASV, RSV, NKJV, NRSV, ERV, MOULTON) means “overseer” (HCSB, ESV, NIV, NET, WUEST, BARCLAY).
  2. The word for “bishop” (Gr. *episkopos*) is only found five times in the New Testament (Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet 2:25).

3. “The Greek term for ‘overseer’ (*episkopos*) was used in secular Greek with a fairly broad range of meanings for someone who watched over someone else. This could be a tutor who watches over students, a soldier or a watchman who watches over a city, a guardian deity, or any kind of ‘guardian’ (as 1 Peter 2:25). Paul uses *episkopos* here and in the parallel passage in Titus 1:6-9 as an alternative expression for an ‘elder’ (*presbyteros*), which brings out the elder’s role as a ‘guardian’ of the welfare of the Christian churches under his care. This is clear from Paul’s famous farewell speech to the elders of Ephesus, when he called these ‘elders’ to meet him at Miletus (Acts 20:17) and said in part: ‘*Keep watch* over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you *overseers*. Be *shepherds* of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood’ (Acts 20:28; emphasis added). One can see from the highlighted words that an ‘overseer’ was an elder in his role as a kind of guardian or watchman. As 1 Timothy 3:9 shows, the overseer was also to be a teacher of ‘deep truths of the faith.’” (Baugh, *Romans to Philemon*, 444-478)
4. “In Acts 20:28 Paul tells the Ephesian elders (Gk. *presbyteros*, Acts 20:17) that ‘the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [Gk. *episkopos*], to care for [Gk. *poimainō*, ‘to pastor, serve as shepherd of’] the church of God.’ Peter also writes, ‘I exhort the elders [Gk. *presbyteros*] among you, as a fellow elder... : shepherd [Gk. *poimainō*, ‘to pastor’] the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight” (1 Pet. 5:1-2).” (Dennis and Grudem, *The ESV Study Bible*)

### III. The Elder As An Example To The Flock

- A. An elder is to lead a life that is worthy of following (1 Pet 5:1-4).
- B. “Godly leadership in the church that can serve as **examples to the flock** involves sensitivity to peoples’ needs, affection for people, authenticity of life, and enthusiastic affirmation, without deception, greed, flattery, or authoritarianism.” (Anders, *I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude*, 90)
- C. “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith *follow*...” (Heb 13:7).
  1. The word *follow* (Gr. *mimēomai*) means “to imitate” and that is how it is translated in many versions of the Bible (HCSB, ESV, NIV, NAS, NET, NRSV, ERV, NABR, CJB, RSV, ASV).
  2. Disciples are required to imitate in behavior the faith of those who rule.
  3. An elder is to be a good example as a father, husband, a neighbor, a teacher, and as a member of the community (1 Tim 3:5).
- D. However, elders are not to be “lords over those entrusted” to them (1 Pet 5:3).

## IV. Elders And Preachers

- A. Both elders and gospel preachers have responsibilities in the church (Eph 4:11-16).
- B. Elders must realize that preachers are not *their employees*.
- C. An evangelist is a member of a congregation like everyone else.
  - 1. But there are functions of his work over which no one has control.
  - 2. In preaching the gospel, he is amenable only to God.
- D. “The word of God is not chained” (2 Tim 2:9)—and it is not to be chained by elders!
  - 1. A preacher must not allow anyone to circumvent the truth with which they are entrusted, by seeking to bind the truth, or exercise authority over it to restrain them from declaring the whole counsel of God.
  - 2. Paul told Titus, “Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you” (Titus 2:15).
  - 3. In speaking, exhorting, and rebuking, a faithful gospel preacher may even have to rebuke an elder (1 Tim 5:19-20).

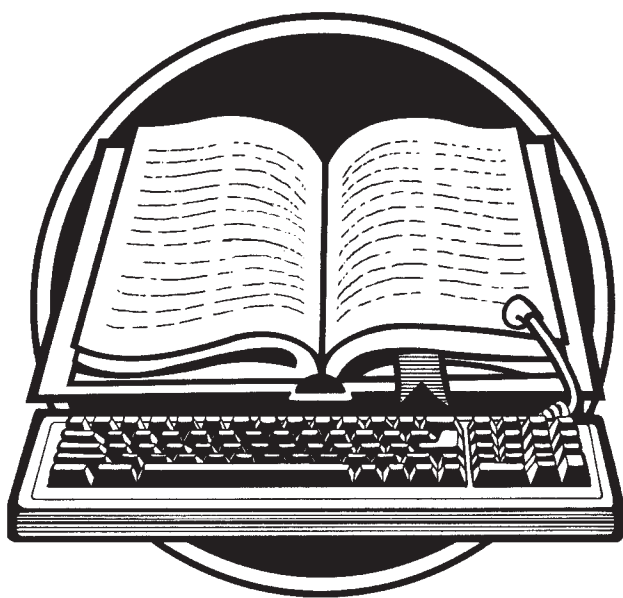
### Conclusion

- I. Not all men *desire* the work of an elder—but desire is one of the qualifications for this work (1 Tim 3:1).
- II. Not every man can or should be an elder (Jas 3:1).
- III. Those who prepared in their youth and served well, have a promise from God.
  - A. “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine” (1 Tim 5:17).
  - B. Older members of this congregation need to encourage young men to start working on the qualities of life that will enable them to serve as elders.

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