

# 1 Timothy

## I. Introduction

- A. **1 Timothy 3:1-7** . . . It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. [2] An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, [3] not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. [4] He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity [5] (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), [6] and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. [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.
- B. Paul's concern for the integrity of the message and the spiritual health of the church did not end with chapter 2 and his instructions about the role of women in church life. He continues this theme into chapter 3.
- C. Pray

## II. The spiritual health of the church and the role of elders

- A. [1] It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine (*good*) work he desires to do.
1. **Trustworthy statement:** Implies that the following statement is reliably true. In other words, it is a statement you can depend on.
    - a. Reminder: There are five "trustworthy statements" in the NT. Three in 1 Timothy, one in 2 Timothy, and one in Titus.
    - b. And as you may recall, we looked at all five when we encountered the first one in **1 Timothy 1:15**.
  2. **If any man aspire to the office of overseer:** Or, if any man eagerly desires or longs for or pursues the office of overseer.
    - a. In Paul's day, an overseer was the pastor or elder of a church. Paul confirms this in his farewell talk with the elders of the church in Ephesus, where he says: "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (**Acts 20:28**).

- b. We can conclude from the fact that Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to deal with the false and bad teachers that there were some who were aspiring to the office of overseer who shouldn't. Though this did not change the necessity or importance of the office, it did require establishing qualifications in order to separate those who were qualified to serve from those who weren't.
  - c. Here in **vs 1-7**, Paul describes the kind of character, motives, and behavior that are not only fitting for an overseer, but also necessary to protect the message and promote the spiritual health of the church and each individual in the church.
  - d. As we work our way through the overseer list, take note that all but one of these requirements are qualifications for service rather than the duties of the one serving. And also note that such things as natural talent, spiritual gifts, education, and social status are not mentioned in any of these verses.
3. Why the emphasis on qualifications rather than duties?
- (1) Because spiritually unqualified people can do the duties, and though they may serve well in fulfilling their duties, they will not do well at protecting the integrity of the message and the overall spiritual health of the church. The reality is, they will harm the church far more than they will help it even though from a human perspective the opposite will look to be true.
  - (2) It is the spiritually qualified person who will do the church good, because he is living a godly life, he is committed to protecting the spiritual health of the church, and he the experience necessary to lead others toward living a godly life.
  - (3) In addition, the person who meets or has made sufficient progress in meeting these qualifications will come into a position of leadership empowered and supported by God, humble, responsible, diligent, able to lead others toward Christian maturity, and able to teach others how to apply God's word in practical ways.
  - (4) Though such a leader will still be learning and growing, he will have made the kind of progress that enables him to be an honorable overseer who is sanctified, useful to God, and prepared for every good work (**2 Timothy 2:21**).
4. Paul concludes this trustworthy statement by saying that **it is a fine (good, honorable, commendable) work such a person desires to do**. The idea here is that when a person who has made worthy progress in meeting the qualifications for overseer desires to be an

overseer (*or an elder or a pastor*), they are bringing to the work a level of godly character and spiritual health that makes the work they do good and honorable.

B. Fourteen qualifications for an overseer or pastor or elder

1. [2] An overseer must be **above reproach**: The person we put into the position of overseer, elder, or pastor must be living the kind of life – in the home, community, work place, and church – that is above reproach. To be above reproach, as a Christian, means there is nothing known or obvious or apparent about you that can rightfully be condemned or shown to be ungodly.
2. Must be **the husband of one wife**: Though this one is simple and clear, its reasoning is not so clear. I suspect it has to do with the overseer learning to be content with what he has at home while still loving his wife as Christ loves the church, being faithful to his wife, and responsibly providing for her while serving God and the church.
3. Must be **temperate**: A form of sober-mindedness or seriousness that primarily is on guard against over-indulging your passions and appetites, and keeping your emotions in check. This requires being thoughtful and vigilantly aware of your thoughts, feelings, words, and deeds for the purpose of preventing yourself from doing something wrong or shameful or hurtful or dishonoring to God.
4. Must be **prudent**: This word can also be translated “self-controlled.”
  - a. Though it is similar to being temperate, it is often applied to being discreet and careful in the means or methods used to gain a desired outcome or accomplish an intended goal.
  - b. A prudent overseer will not abuse power or misuse money or manipulate people or misrepresent God’s word to bring more people into the church or keep them in attendance or accomplish some other goal that he thinks will improve or grow the church.
5. Must be **respectable**: To be respectable is to be worthy of and therefore deserving of respect. However, to be worthy of respect you must live a respect-worthy life. When you live a respect-worthy life, you will gain a good reputation. When you gain a good reputation, people will see you as trustworthy. When people see you as trustworthy, they will listen to what you have to say and give serious consideration to what you teach and what you counsel.
  - a. The position of overseer may give you the right to be influential in believer’s lives, but being respectable earns you that right.

6. Must be **hospitable**: Hospitality is friendliness coupled with the kind of kindness and generosity that opens your home and food supply to fellow believers, neighbors, travelers, and even strangers.
  - a. Hospitality invites folks in, treats them well, and serves their needs.
  - b. Therefore, hospitality is a manifestation of godliness. As such, an overseer ought to be hospitable – first, because he is a Christian, and second, because it sets an example for the church.
7. Must be **able to teach**:
  - a. In most church settings, there are more who want to teach than are able or ought to teach.
  - b. To be a worthy teacher in a church setting requires humility, a willingness to be taught, an intentional effort to grow in the knowledge of God and God’s word, pondering the meaning and application of God’s word, a sufficient understanding of the people being taught to know how to apply God’s word to them, and adequate preparation for each occasion of teaching.
  - c. In addition, a worthy teacher is one who seeks God’s wisdom, insight, help, and empowerment to teach whatever it is he is teaching.

C. [3] Must not be addicted to wine or pugnacious:

1. **Not addicted to wine**: An overseer must not be dependent on wine for anything other than medicinal purposes. Wine is not to be a source of comfort or a means of dulling the pain and sorrow resulting from life in general or from the task of overseeing the church and the people attending.
  - a. I think it is reasonable to apply this requirement to things beyond alcohol – such as video games, the internet, food, TV, movies, and other addicting things.
  - b. Why? Because any addiction that we turn to for some form of comfort or insulation from the pain of life works against our trust in and dependance on God. It erodes our hunger and thirst for righteousness, our self-control, and our ability to identify with and teach others how to remain godly in the face of life’s challenges, trials, disappointments, and sorrows.
2. **Not pugnacious**: That is, not quarrelsome or disposed to fighting with others to win an argument, or to be seen as right, or to make them into what you want them to be or move them to do what you want them to do – even if it is right and godly.

- a. Pugnaciousness comes from pride and a sense of self-importance. It is driven by the belief that who you are and what you know is reason enough for people to believe what you say, do what you say, and go where you lead.
  - b. Using power tactics to push believers into forms of godliness or Christian service may make them appear godly for a time or in certain settings, but let the ill-winds of life blow too hard and they will revert to who they have been all along. As the old saying goes, “A man forced against his will is of the same opinion still.”
  - c. Therefore, church life is not about numbers or programs or cheerful volunteers or managing people into being what you think they ought to be. Church life is about converting the lost, giving the converts the tools and help to change their lives, and teaching the foolish and immature how to be wise and mature Christians.
    - (1) Or we might say, church life is about helping people become new creations in Christ Jesus.
    - (2) This goal is not accomplished quickly or through the use of force. It is accomplished through patience, persistence, love, understanding, repeated teaching, listening, and example.
3. Must be **gentle**: It was prophesied of Jesus in **Isaiah 42:3**, “A bruised reed He will not break and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; [yet] He will faithfully bring forth justice.” Imagine bringing forth justice with such gentleness and grace as to not break a bruised reed or extinguish a dimly burning wick.
- a. This is the gentleness, yet honesty an overseer is to have in the church. Jesus is our example in this, for He himself said, “I am gentle and humble in heart” (**Matthew 11:29**).
  - b. This kind of gentleness comes from humility, a humility that is honest about our own sinfulness and how hard it has been for us to change. It comes from listening longer in order to understand the stories behind a person’s behavior. It comes from godly compassion, and from being realistic about how quickly a person is likely to change given their situation and past circumstances.
4. Must be **peaceable**: This speaks of remaining calm, respectful, self-controlled, and quiet for as long as necessary when enduring a trial or tribulation, or when being attacked and criticized, or when facing a challenging or difficult or hostile person or situation.

- a. Outward peacefulness, when it is the result of self-control, is good – even though it can be lost given the right circumstances.
    - b. Outward peacefulness, when it comes from inward peace based on believing that you are safe in God’s hands, is best – for it endures forever.
  5. Must be **free from the love of money**: An overseer who loves money is more interested in himself than God, and more interested in what benefits him than what benefits the church. He is not in ministry for God’s sake or for the good of the people, but for his own sake and the earthly profits he can accumulate.
  6. This behavior comes from a mindset that is more interested in laying up treasure on earth than in heaven, and more interested in being served than in serving, and more committed to selfishness than to love.
- D. [4] He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity [5] (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),
1. Managing a household requires a number of responsibilities and skills, such as thinking rationally, thoughtfulness, financial wisdom, care for the home and property, organizational skills, planning, awareness of the needs, activities, and behavior of each family member, and being present in the home enough to properly manage all the things that need to be managed.
    - a. Therefore, an absentee husband can hardly be aware enough of the needs and wants of his family to manage them well.
    - b. Yet sadly, it is common for overseers to treat the ministry as if its importance justifies treating the family as insignificant in comparison. This has resulted in neglecting a biblically proper care for the family and each of its members.
  2. This does not mean the husband is to do this alone. His wife brings some measure of knowledge, wisdom, and skills that can blend with the husbands skills, or act in place of the husband where he lacks such skills.
  3. If the hardest place to be a Christian is in the home, then failure in the home will surely result in failure in the church in relation to the things that God’s deems valuable.

- E. [6] and must be not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.
  - 1. Solomon said, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling” (**Proverbs 16:18**). Pride never produces good or brings the prideful person good rewards. It always does harm to the proud and those effected by the proud.
  - 2. Sadly, when it comes to church leadership, too many of us think more highly of ourselves than we ought. We not only want to be seen as important, to have power, and to lead – we think we have what it takes to do the job better than those currently doing it.
  - 3. It is this kind of pride that got the devil into trouble with God, and put out of heaven. And it is this kind of pride that not only harms the church, but that also gets church leaders into trouble with God so as to experience God’s judgment – whatever that may be.
  
- F. [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.
  - 1. The overseer’s behavior in the world must be in conformity with God’s word, his own teaching, and his position of leadership in the church.
  - 2. Why? Because the world expects a person in this position to properly and honorably represent, the position, God’s word, and the church’s teaching.
  - 3. To fail in this opens the door for the devil to bring ministry ending trouble and shame into the life of the overseer.

### III. Conclusion

- A. It is unlikely any new elder or pastor completely and perfectly fulfills these qualifications. However, we ought never compromise any of these qualifications just to fill a leadership position. And we ought to require those in leadership to be making serious, observable, and measurable progress toward fulfilling them and maintaining the progress made.