

Shepherds & Servants 8

Are Qualified Leaders

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Memory Verses: 1 Timothy 3:1

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Last week we had a broad overview of the roles of Elders and Deacons. We saw that these are the two offices of leadership of the local church prescribed for us in the Bible. We went through over 20 different passages of scripture showing us that not only are there to be Elders and Deacons but that each church should have a plurality of Elders to oversee and shepherd the church and a team of Deacons to serve in the various ministries of the church.

Today and next week we are going to be taking it one step further and show you what the qualifications are to hold these offices in the local church. And as you will see, as where these focus on Elders and Deacons, they are qualifications which all of us should aspire to. This week we will be focusing in on the qualifications for Elders as they are outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Read with me there if you would.

You may say, that list is unreasonable. No one can live like that. How can we expect anyone to be able to have all of these qualities and attributes? This is why it is a noble calling and is not for everyone. But being an elder also takes one under the grace and mercy of our Lord. Elders aren't perfect people, they are just repentant and humble men following God's lead as under-shepherds. This list isn't who they are all the time, but it is what an Elder should look like and aspire to be. This morning we will see that **though being an Elder is a noble calling, it requires a humble discipline.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

First... **Elders Must Feel A Calling To Spiritually Shepherd.** Look again at 1 Timothy 3:1. We see the words here aspire and desire. These words give us a sense of calling. A personal attraction to a certain purpose. Elders shouldn't reluctantly agree to lead. Rather, they should feel that if they don't they are neglecting their duty. There should be something inside of them, based upon their giftings and qualifications that tells them they have been prepared for such a position and if they don't fill it the body may be left leaderless.

Some may be pursuing Eldership because they feel a strong calling to it and know that is where they should serve. I personally had a similar calling like this when I was only 14 years old. I knew I was being called into ministry and lived accordingly as I pursued a ministry degree

at Liberty. But others may not actively pursue it and in humility wait, as David did, to be established. Instead of feeling a "calling" they were called upon. Once called upon by their fellow Elders / Pastors and their church body, they recognized that this is what they should do.

The point is, **just because you don't feel a supernatural calling doesn't mean you can't be called upon by the church and find your place as an elder.** Regardless, still, if you are to be an Elder, at some point you must recognize that you are gifted to shepherd the people of God and know that this is what He wants you to do. So in humility you surrender to this call. **Though being an Elder is a noble calling, it requires a humble discipline.**

Also... **Elders Must Be Above Reproach.** Look again at 1 Timothy 3:2a. Above reproach simply means blameless, sinless, pure, and righteous. It doesn't mean they are perfect, but it does mean that it would be hard to find a real problem with the way they live their lives in accordance with scripture. They sin, but they confess their sins and repent and are restored almost immediately. They don't have habitual, non-repentant sin in their lives nor do they live in a questionable way. In other words, their spiritual life is without question. No one would ever think, that person has real unresolved spiritual issues. This can be seen as all encompassing statement which has sub-qualifiers to it, which verses 2 and 3 flesh out. We see that they are to be... Sober minded, Self-controlled, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. Let's take each of these one by one.

He is to be Sober-minded, which means to be free from sinful influences that would lead us away from godly wisdom. Someone above reproach is not influenced by societal pressures or lured easily by evil ideas.

He is to be Self-controlled, which means he is able to keep his fleshly desires in check. He doesn't give into the notion that he is an animal and can't control his bodily impulses. Rather, he has, as Paul says, beat his body into submission. He is Self-controlled because he is sober minded.

He is not to be a Drunkard. This means just what it says. He knows the difference between drinking alcohol and getting drunk. He knows the dangers of too much alcohol and refrains from making drinking a habit. One who is sober-minded will be physically sober as well. One who is self-controlled will not be controlled by alcohol.

He is not Violent but gentle. Again, this means exactly what it says. He isn't a fighter. He doesn't use his fists when he doesn't get his way. He doesn't beat his wife. He doesn't beat his kids. He doesn't get in fights with the neighbors. Instead he easily forgives, turns the other cheek, and makes peace with the situation.

He is not quarrelsome or contentious. He doesn't fight with his fists and he doesn't start fights with his words or actions. Meaning, he doesn't

cause disunity or disharmony. He doesn't slander, gossip, back-bite, or rouse dissension.

And lastly, he is not a lover of money, or greedy. He isn't after your money, and he isn't ambitious for lavish living and larger bank accounts. Money is not his driving force.

Of course there are many more things that could be added to this list but these are important as they apply to the ministry. **Elders disqualify themselves when they are out of control, given to their sinful passions, drunkards, fight and bring disunity to the church, and can't be trusted with financial issues because of their greed.** This is clearly not above reproach. **Though being an Elder is a noble calling, it requires a humble discipline.**

Next... **Elders Must Be Good Husbands & Fathers.** Look again at **1 Timothy 3:2b and 4-5.** Simply put he must be a faithful shepherd to his wife and disciple his children well. He is to be the husband of one wife. Now there is much debate about this issue. Does this mean that he must be married? Does this mean that he can't have ever been divorced? What about pastors who have had their spouses die? What about bachelors who have a spiritual maturity beyond their years or feel a call to celibacy (which Paul prescribes)?

We believe the correct interpretation of the verse to be "a one woman man." Meaning, this speaks to his character as a husband if he is married. Meaning... he doesn't cheat on his wife. He is monogamous and faithful to the woman he is married to. Of course this faithfulness can be questioned if one is recently divorced. But faithfulness has more to do with the care, love, and devotion one has to his wife than just whether or not he committed adultery. A faithful Elder must pray for and with his wife. He must lead her and disciple her as he would his congregation. He must be her pastor first, before he can be the pastor of the church. And he must love her first, before he loves the church.

And Elders must disciple their children well. It says here in **vs4** that he must manage his household keeping his children submissive. Of course, this definitely refers to the fact that parents are to lead their children as children learn in submission to them. But this also refers to the fact that fathers are to teach their children to submit to God. This is talking about discipleship. It is the primary ministry and responsibility of dads and moms to raise their children to know and love Jesus. This is moreso for Elders. Of course, we know this is a true issue because for some reason Pastor's kids have a reputation. I praise the Lord that my kids have bucked that trend at every stage. We also see this in the way each of our deacons have disciplined and led their children and grandchildren to follow Christ. The bottom line when it comes to these two issues is this... **if an Elder is a bad leader of his house; he will be a**

bad leader of the church. Though being an Elder is a noble calling, it requires a humble discipline.

Next... **Elders Must Be Kind & Humble.** Look again at **1 Timothy 3:2c.** They must be respectable and hospitable. Look also at verse 7 where it says that he must be thought well of by even outsiders. Christians and non-Christians alike should sing the praises of this man because he is sinless and because he is winsome. Elders open their homes to people. Elders treat people with dignity and honor. Elders are loving, gentle, meek, and honest. Elders are admired. It is important that the is kind and respected even by outsiders. If he is sinless and above reproach in most areas but is a jerk, people will not follow him and he will not attract people to Christ. How can you be the light of the world and be someone no one wants anything to do with? **One of Satan's biggest traps to Elders is making them think that the way they treat people doesn't matter.** But it does. Just look at men like James McDonald and Mark Driscoll. Pastors who didn't fall into financial sin or sexual sin but fell because of their attitude and arrogance. Where is the humility of Christ in our leaders if not in our Elders? **Though being an Elder is a noble calling, it requires a humble discipline.**

Also... **Elders Must Be Able To Teach.** Look again at **1 Timothy 3:2d.** We went over this a bit last week but we will quickly cover it here again. The only qualification and role for Elders that is not given to Deacons is able to teach. Their job is to teach as they shepherd the flock in discipleship. If they can't teach well then they can't be an Elder. You may say, what does teach well mean? I would say this. If a man is not able to convey simple principles drawn directly from scripture and deliver them in a way that prompts the congregation or those he is discipling to make a decision to grow closer to Christ or go further away from him, then he can't teach. Teaching and preaching is a gift and it must be done well enough to draw people to Christ. It takes a discipline to study and practice the art of teaching and preaching. **Though being an Elder is a noble calling, it requires a humble discipline.**

And lastly... **Elders Must Not Be New Converts.** Look again at **1 Timothy 3:6.** According to this passage, Elders cannot be new converts. The reason is simple; if they are new converts they will be more susceptible to arrogance, false doctrines, tickling ears, and falling into sin. Now there is no definite age given here so we are not talking about how old they are. We are talking about how long they have been saved. And since we aren't given a timeline of how long that should be, it is still subjective. The point is, when picking a new Elder the other leadership must be aware of how long the prospective Elder has been a believer and test his spiritual maturity. **Being an elder isn't for baby Christians. Though being an Elder is a noble**

calling, it requires a humble discipline.

Application

So the application this morning is clear. When the leadership of our church brings new prospective Elders to you on October 18th you should know whether or not these men are indeed qualified. We are a church of transparency. We will not hide the process and we will not hide our spiritual failures. We will put everything that we can out in the open and be judged by Christ and the church. We will have qualified Elders leading this church.

Conclusion

As Thabiti Anyabwile says in his book, Finding faithful elders and deacons, “the call to serve Christ as an under-shepherd is a high calling. Not everyone may take the mantle of leadership in the church. Those who are called must be examples to the flock in every area of life. They must be models of devout faith inside and outside the church, commending Christ and the gospel to all. And yet, apart from being able to teach, the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 are characteristics that every Christian should increasingly possess to grant us the blessing of faithful, reliable men to lead our churches, as well as the fruit of his Spirit.