

# LIVING AS A LEADER IN GOD'S FAMILY

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Dr. Kent Dresdow, Senior Associate Pastor

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**Note:** The following are the pastor's notes used in preaching this message. This is not a complete, word-for-word transcription of what was preached. These notes serve as a companion to the complete message, which is available by listening to the audio version. Bible quotes are primarily from ESV.

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## INTRODUCTION

Paul moves from his first priority for the church—corporate worship (1 Timothy 2), to the second priority—leadership (1 Timothy 3). Before we start into our passage this morning, we should note structurally that the gospel envelopes this section on church worship (1 Timothy 1:12-17) and church leadership (1 Timothy 3:14-16). The net effect of that is that the gospel context frames in both... We can rejoice that true power in worship and leadership flows from and culminates in the gospel.

What we're purposing to see is this: a checklist of a godly leader's character that we can all use to gauge our own character, but that is to especially mark out an elder's character in an exemplary way. Here then, is what it looks like to live as a leader in God's family.

## I. SUMMARY CHARACTERISTICS (1 Timothy 3:1-2a)

### A. The leader's motivation (1 Timothy 3:1)

#### 1. Does he aspire appropriately?

The word "aspire" is a rare Greek term meaning "to set out to obtain," to "reach out for" or "to strive." In the parallel passage on the qualifications of an elder (Titus 1:5), notice that Paul states that Titus was to *appoint* elders in the church. So in 1 Timothy, would-be leaders are to *aspire* to the office of an elder, whereas in Titus 1, would-be leaders are to be *appointed* to the office. Which is it—internal aspiration or external appointment? Answer: both. Part of the elder qualification is that he must both aspire to the office internally while also being appointed to the office externally.

#### 2. Does he desire appropriately?

This is the verb translated elsewhere as "lust." Usually sinful in orientation, the term here in this context points to a strong desire for a good work. It's good work, but it's hard work, and thus the internal aspiration should be matched by good, hard work in ministry before any affirmation is given regarding a potential elder's desire. Does he aspire internally (as he's being affirmed externally)? And does he desire the good, hard work that goes with the office?

### B. The leader's qualification (1 Timothy 3:2a)

"Being above reproach" means basically that nothing sticks. One pastor referred to this as being a "Teflon man." Throw any accusation at him and nothing sticks. It doesn't mean that an elder is perfect; nor does it mean that no one will ever have anything against him; but it does mean that, by God's grace, the elders will not have an accusation about one of the following characteristics besmirch his character or reputation.

## II. SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS (1 Timothy 3:2b-7)

### A. Question #1: How is his marriage? (1 Timothy 3:2)

The wording is literally: "a one-woman man," pointing to the reality that the elder is devoted to his wife. This doesn't mean that an elder has to be married, by the way. Neither Jesus nor Paul were married, yet I think you'd agree that they were both elder-qualified! But the point is the same: if an elder is married, it should be clear that he loves his wife—not perfectly, but faithfully—and that he is devoted to her.

### B. Question #2: How is his mastery internally? (1 Timothy 3:2)

#### 1. Is he clear-headed?

That is, is he sober-minded? Is he temperate? Since Paul will specifically call out sobriety in the next verse, he must be referring to mental clear-headedness. An elder must show the ability to think clearly and evenly, which enables people to follow his train of thought, and thus his leadership.

#### 2. Is he controlled?

There is some overlap with sober-minded, to be sure, but if there is a distinction, it seems like the difference here is that he thinks ahead. Life doesn't get out of control because the leader will prudently think through life's challenges and obstacles and not get rattled or thrown off by them.

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**3. Is he “*cosmos*?”**

Church leaders are to be *cosmos*, “ordered, respectable, put together,” not physically as much as spiritually. Life should be well-balanced and well-ordered in the Word and in life, and that balance or orderedness shows up in his demeanor and conduct.

**C. Question #3: How is his ministry? (1 Timothy 3:2)**

**1. Does he love new people in the church well?**

The term hospitable means “a love for strangers,” specifically in context, a love for strangers in the context of the church. Elders should excel in this ministry, as it is one of the unique marks of an elder over against the characteristics of being a deacon.

**2. Does he teach people in the church well?**

The phrase “able to teach” is one word in the Greek, meaning exactly that. It doesn’t mean that he’s an amazing teacher, but that he is skillful in his teaching.

**D. Question #4: How is his mastery externally? (1 Timothy 3:3)**

**1. Is he enslaved by any substance?**

Paul says that we must not be drunkards, or addicted to wine. They must maintain external mastery over wine—and in our day of unprecedented substance abuse—every other substance, in order to maintain their internal mastery above.

**2. Is he gentle physically and verbally?**

The elder must not be combative physically (“violence”) or verbally (quarreling), but instead be gentle. The word is rare, and carries a wide range of nuances: he must be fair, helpful, reasonable, considerate, gracious, kind, magnanimous.

**3. Does he love money?**

“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs” (1 Timothy 6:9-10). This is especially true with God’s leaders—they need to be careful to avoid the love of money.

**E. Question #5: How are his minors? (1 Timothy 3:4-5)**

**1. Does he manage his family well?**

It is remarkable how important one’s relationship to his family is to Paul. A man simply must lead his family well. What should his leadership look like?

**2. Does he lead with dignity?**

The word means what it says, with the added nuance of “seriousness and respectability.” Thus, do his kids respect him? Does he take fatherhood seriously? Is he earnest in his leadership in the home, and does it come across in his parenting?

**3. Do his kids submit to his leadership?**

This characteristic follows on the heels of dignity, respect, and seriousness. Basically, this means what it says! On the issue of “believing children” in the parallel text in Titus 1:6, however, review the sermon series on Titus from the summer of 2009.

**F. Question #6: How is his maturity? (1 Timothy 3:6-7)**

**1. Is he a recently saved believer?**

There’s a sense in which long-term engagement in the battle of ministry is a necessary characteristic of the one who would serve as a leader in God’s family. Why? Because once a leader is “puffed up” with self-admiration, he succumbs to the age-old sin that took Satan down—pride. Humility seasoned by experience is an indispensable qualification for eldership.

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## 2. Is his reputation solid with unbelievers?

This is not a throw away characteristic. Literally, the text says, “he must have a good witness with those outside.” One’s witness to the world is crucial to one’s qualification for the office of elder.

### CONCLUSION

Simply put, an elder’s character and reputation can be discerned by asking the above questions. But listen, *godly character and reputation takes a long time to build, but only a moment to destroy*. So much is at stake. What church leaders are in microcosm, the church will become in macrocosm. Let them lead, then, only insofar as they follow the gospel that controls and directs them.