

1 Timothy 3:1–7

MPS: **Biblical Elders lead God's family to operate as it ought to**

INTRO:

Purpose of the letter: **1 Timothy 3:15 (ESV) 15** *if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.*

- How does that then pertain to leadership in the family? In a biological family there's mom and dad that are to lead – but what about the church family?
- There are two biblical offices designated for leadership in the Bible. We will be looking at these two biblical offices of elder and deacon for the next 2 weeks. This week will be about elders and next week about deacons.

OPEN:

1 Timothy 3:1 (ESV) 1 *The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.*

- The terms **overseer**, “elder,” and “pastor” (or “shepherd”) are all used in the NT to refer to the same office. In Titus 1:5–9 “elder” and “overseer” are used interchangeably.
- The word ‘overseer’ here is the office of elder.
- **What exactly is an elder?** If you are pursuing Christ and engaged with HIS church, this is an important question to answer because it directly impacts your family and church.

What an elder is not:

1. Older people in the church (though an elder can be older).
2. Good business men who are on the governing board of the church (though an Elder can be this).
3. Alternative to Deacons (though Elders are different from Deacons). Servant leaders – lead servants
4. An elite individual

What IS an elder?

- First of all an elder refers to a qualified man who holds a biblical office.

- There are two biblical offices: Elders and Deacons.

(Phil 1:1,5) *Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.*

- We make the distinction between elders and deacons this way:
- Elders are servant leaders and Deacons are lead servants.

Today's big idea is:

Biblical Elders lead God's family to operate as it ought to

(and next week **"Biblical Deacons help God's family operate as it ought to."**)

The term "elder" is interchangeable with the words, pastor, shepherd, overseer, bishop

Elder – *presbuterous* (prez – bee' – ter – ose)

Pastor or shepherd – *poimen* (pew' – me – on)

Overseer or Bishop – *episkopos* (a- piece' ka- pose)

Titus 1:5,7 (ESV) *5 This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders [presbuterous] in every town as I directed you...7 For an overseer [episkopos], as God's steward, must be above reproach...*

(Acts 20:17-18, 28 ESV) Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders [presbuterous] of the church to come to him. [18] And when they came to him, he said to them... [28] Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [episkopountes], to care [poimaino] (Pew-meno') for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

(1Pet 5:1-2 ESV) So I exhort the elders [presbuterous] among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: [2] shepherd [poimane] the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight [episkopountes], not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;

1. How does a man become a Pastor/Elder?

1. He is called by the Holy Spirit. (Acts 20:28). *in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers*

Call has three aspects:

- Inner conviction
- Outer commendation

- Opportunity

2. He has been observed by other Pastors/Elders and the church. (Acts 6:6, Acts 13:3, 1Tim 4:14).

3. He meets Biblical qualifications. (1Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9).
(and he continues to meet these qualifications...)

4. He is affirmed by other Pastor/Elders and his church. (1Tim 5:17-22).

1 Timothy 5:22 (ESV) *Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands,*

- He is assessed.
- Let's look at the Text for these qualifications that elders should be assessed by:

1 Timothy 3:1 (ESV) *1 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.*

1 He has aspirations.

- He is a go-getter, assertive, passionate. He is a self motivator, a leader and doesn't give up easily.
- The aspiration is not for authority and power however. The call to be an elder/pastor is a call to die to self and serve God's people. Even though elders do have authority, it's the kind of man who doesn't abuse authority that God calls to that position.

(Matthew 20:26-28 ESV). *But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, [27] and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, [28] even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

- It's a call to be like Jesus. There is an aspiration that constantly says, "I will die for this congregation." "I will lay down my own rights for this church." "I will use my authority to serve not be served."
- He is a man willing to 'smell like sheep.' Not LORD over sheep, not to have meetings about the sheep, but to live life with the sheep.
- **These are for EVERY MAN, not a standard for the elite – but all men.**
- **Single women, this is what you are looking for in a man.**
- **Congregation, do our elders meet these qualifications?**

1 Timothy 3:2 (ESV) 2 *Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,*

2. He is above reproach.

- He goes above and beyond to do things in a way that has Integrity.
- Not perfect, but lives above reproach.

3. He is husband of one wife. He is a one-woman man. Case by case with divorced men.

- He isn't marked as a womanizer or someone who undresses women with his eyes. He isn't a flirt, he isn't someone who is addicted to porn,
- There is no other woman for him.

4. He is sober-minded and self-controlled.

- He isn't addicted to things. He isn't a glutton or hobby-maniac. He remains clear headed, putting the things of the church and others before his own needs.

5. He is respectable

- There is something about him you respect. He is honorable.
- He is like a spiritual father more than a spiritual brother
- Titus includes disciplined (vs 8) and as God's steward, (vs 7)

6. He is hospitable

- He and his wife open their home to others when they need a place,
- he (and his wife) open their home to disciple others.
- He is warm, smiles, loves.

7. He is able to teach.

- This means he can answer with the Word of God
- and rebuke those who contradict it (Titus 1:9)
- ***Titus 1:9*** *He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.*

1 Timothy 3:3 (ESV) 3 *not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.*

8. He is not a drunkard.

- Not that he can't have a drink from time to time, but his life is not marked by alcohol and he doesn't have to have it.
- Otis

9. He is not violent but gentle.

- He doesn't blow his top when things go wrong or things don't go according to plan. He isn't a violent person.

- He's not clubbing people over the head – even when they deserve it.
- He's not violent with his words, but gentle.

10. He is not quarrelsome

- He doesn't go looking for conflict. He doesn't get his kicks from debates and arguments.
- On the other hand neither does he back down.
- He doesn't want war, but will go if he has to.

11. He is not a lover of money. This doesn't mean he should be broke. This doesn't mean he shouldn't have money, it means money doesn't have him.

1 Timothy 3:4–5 (ESV) *4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?*

- (Not the planters church, not the pastors church, not the elders church, not even the members church... God's church. It's His, so He gets to call the shots)

12. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, [5] for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

- A man's home life is proving ground for ministry.
- If he's not going to lay down his life for his wife and kids, what makes you think he'd ever lay down my life for you?
- Wife – is she being loved and served? Is she resting in him
- Children – are they respectful, have they been loved as people not objects? Are they drawn to their dad or keep their distance from him?
- He is seen as a spiritual father.

1 Timothy 3:6 (ESV) *6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.*

13. He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.

- He doesn't need to be immature and let the authority of elder go to his head.
- He needs to have been kicked around by life a little.

- “It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until He’s hurt him deeply.” AW Tozer.

1 Timothy 3:7 (ESV) *Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*

14. He must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

- Funny it doesn’t say those inside the church – but it says those OUTSIDE the church.
- He is a good neighbor, a good employee or employer, he is caring to those outside the church.

2. What does an elder/pastor do?

1. Oversee

You want a team of qualified men spiritually leading you so that you flourish and thrive. The New Testament pattern was a plurality of Elders leading each local congregation, (Acts 14:23, Acts 20:17, Titus 1:5, 1Tim 4:14, 1Pet 5:1-2, James 5:14).

- Guard the doctrine and direction of the church so the household of God stays healthy and on mission.
- Make the hard decisions that protect the flock and keep the church operating as it ought to.
- Watch over the souls of the people (Hebrews 13:17)—not just the programs, but the spiritual health of the family.
- Lead by example so the church can see what faithful, responsible leadership looks like in real life.
- Ensure the church is protected from false teaching, division, and drift.

Plurality of elders

(Acts 14:23 ESV) And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

(1Tim 5:17 ESV) Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

(James 5:14 ESV) Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

(Titus 1:5 ESV) *This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you*

First among equals.

2. Shepherd

- Care, disciple, discipline, encourage, and love the church.
- Comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.
- Smell like sheep

3. Teach –

- This doesn't mean they have to be a great preacher.
- This means they can rightly divide the word of God theologically BUT then they are able to apply it themselves and teach others the same.
- Theological alignment
- Not necessarily a scholar but should be scholarly – able to answer questions with clarity and sharpness

3. What is the congregation's part in being led, taught and shepherded by elders?

Hebrews 13:17 (ESV) 17 *Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

- Obey and submit to their leadership so they can watch over your souls without constant resistance.
- Receive their teaching and correction as care, not as control, so their work is a joy instead of a burden.
- Pray for them and speak well of them, remembering they will give an account for how they shepherded you.
- Make their load lighter by being easy to lead—responsive, unified, and free of unnecessary groaning.
- Trust that their watch over your soul is for your good, and cooperate so the whole family of God flourishes.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUPS:

1. Looking at the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3, which ones most challenge or encourage you as you think about the men who lead our church (or about your own home if you're a man)? Why?
2. Hebrews 13:17 calls the congregation to make it a joy for elders to watch over your souls. What does that practically look like for you in how you receive their teaching, leadership, and care?