

# 1<sup>ST</sup> TIMOTHY 3:1-7: LEADERS IN THE CHURCH

The elders of the church stand in a unique position: they are shepherds, administrators, and servants.

## 1. Identifying the elders of the church: 1 Peter 5:1-4.

1 Peter 5:1-4

1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

- 1.1. The elders are the pastors and the pastors are the elders.
- 1.2. The elders are the bishops and the bishops are the elders.
- 1.3. The bishops are the elders are the pastors.

## 2. Describing the elders of the church: 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

Remember: these are not simply requirements for the elite of the faith who aspire to leadership, these are minimum requirements for godly living.

- 2.1. Blameless.: 1 Timothy 3:2.

This word for blameless means, “not to be taken hold of.” In other words, you cannot be honestly charged with moral failure.

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Titus 1:6 if a man is **blameless**, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.

This word means not indictable; nothing can be laid to your charge as a result of public investigation.

How do you do that?

Psalm 119:9-11

- 9 How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.
- 10 With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!
- 11 Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!

### 2.2. The husband of one wife.

This is a reference to a man's moral sexual behavior, not to his marital status. Is he faithful to his wife, if married? And does he demonstrate, if he is single, that he would be faithful to one woman, if married? This would be determined by the way in which he treats women. A single man who consistently plays the field, dating many women, may not be demonstrating a proper attitude towards women.

In our day, this requirement has put more men out of the ministry than any other requirement for the shepherd.

Proverbs 6:32-33

- 32 Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does so destroys his own soul.
- 33 Wounds and dishonor he will get, and his reproach will not be wiped away.

Odd interpretations:

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- It intends to forbid polygamy (which it does, but it does more than just that).
- It means no remarriage after the death of one's wife. (Remember, the issue is morality, not marital status.)
- It means divorced men are excluded from leadership as elders in the local church.

This requirement requires a man who is devoted, heart, mind, and soul to his wife. He is a man who proves by his actions that he loves, desires, and thinks only of her.

### 2.3. Temperate.

This word originally meant “wineless” or “unmixed with wine.” It came to be used of those who were clear-headed or sober-minded.

Leviticus 10:9 "Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you [Aaron, the high priest],  
nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die.  
It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations,

If clear-headed sobriety was needed of Aaron, then is it any less needed among God's men today?

Anything that can cloud your judgment or hinder your wisdom makes you an intemperate person. Watching television too much can turn your brain to pudding and cause you to be an intemperate person, one who cannot think clearly.

It does not, in itself, forbid alcoholic beverages. Although the etymology of the root word is “wineless,” the usage in Koine Greek (the language of the New Testament) connoted and denoted clear-headedness.

### 2.4. Sober-minded.

The word means to be thoughtful or sensible in your thought-life.

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The temperate man will become a thoughtful and self-controlled man. Such a man has a sure and steady mind, he has a sound mental health.

### 2.5. Good behavior.

The word actually means orderly: *kosmios*.

The elder must live a life that demonstrates order and is becoming to others who wish to have their lives in order.

The word also means modest (used in 1 Timothy 2:9 in reference to women's apparel.)

### 2.6. Hospitable.

*Philoxenos* (φιλόχενος): lovers of strangers.

Elders must be willing to make all visitors feel welcome and loved.

Their homes **must** be available to those who need comfort, friendship, or help.

It cannot be a virtue limited to those we like or that we know well, because the word means lover of strangers.

The elder's heart as well as his home should be open to strangers.

### 2.7. Able to teach.

The elder must be able to teach the great doctrines of the faith. An elder should equip himself for teaching so that people will seek him out as a teacher.

In 2 Timothy 2:2, there is a moral responsibility implied in passing on the doctrines of our faith to others:

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And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Titus 1:9 explains more fully the responsibility of elders to stand firm in their doctrine, exhorting true believers to stand firm, and to refute those who hold wrong doctrine:

holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

All elders must be able to teach, but there is a teaching elder who has that as his primary responsibility within the church:

1 Timothy 5:17      Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, **especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.**

This is the primary task of the elder of the church.

### 2.8. Not given to wine.

Lit.: not beside the wine.

Remember that the wine of Paul's day was far lower in alcoholic content than the wine of today. In 1 Timothy 5:23, Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake, but his understanding of wine's alcoholic content and ours is vastly different. Certainly, distilled spirits would be "strong drink" and therefore forbidden to the Christian.

Proverbs 20:1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

This states that the one who drinks is not wise; and, of all the qualities needed in a church shepherd, wisdom is the greatest.

This restriction does not forbid drinking wine—it does, however, forbid the consumption of any alcoholic beverage that would cloud the moral judgment of an elder. Any amount of alcoholic beverage that in any way inhibited the ability of the elder to discern truth from error or good from

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evil is forbidden. The Bible, however, does not forbid the drinking of wine, either for health or celebration.

### 2.9. Not violent.

The word in the Greek is a noun, not an adjective as seen in the English text.

Lit.: a striker,” one who lashes out physically against his enemies.

A Christian leader must be a “gentle man.”

### 2.10. Not greedy for money.

The elder must be careful not to be willing to accept money dishonestly or under questionable conditions.

The word means “shameful gain.”

### 2.11. Gentle.

This man is gentle with people; he easily forgives people for their frailties.

This is the opposite of being violent (a striker).

The word comes from a root word meaning to yield or give way. On matters not effecting morality or doctrine, elders must be willing to yield.

Elders should be known for their sweet reasonableness.

A blunt, angry, or “pushy” man is not a gentle man.

### 2.12. Not quarrelsome.

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An elder does not seek out battles, verbal or physical.

The Greek word means a reluctance to fight.

To have a contentious person in leadership will produce only disunity and disharmony, the opposite of the unity of mind and purpose the Holy Spirit is committed to produce.

### 2.13. Not covetous.

No man should be in the ministry for the money.

Love of money is a strong motivation to the false teacher.

1 Thessalonians 2:5 For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness-- God is witness.

1 Peter 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

Speaking of false teachers, Peter states: 2 Peter 2:3 **By covetousness they will exploit you** with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

### 2.14. One who rules his own house well.

“Rules” from an old word meaning to stand before (as in leadership).

The elder must stand before (lead) his family in a decent, orderly fashion. If a man cannot provide godly leadership for his family, how can he lead the church?

The proof of a man’s godly leadership will be that his family willingly follows him.

An elder’s children should be respectful, well-disciplined, and believing.

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This does not mean they have to be Stepford Children.

An elder's children should bring honor to him. If a man cannot lead and disciple those of his own house, how can he do it in the larger universe of the local church.

How he acts at home will determine, in time, how he will act in the church. Remember Talkative in *Pilgrim's Progress*, "a saint abroad and a devil at home."

### 2.15. Not a novice.

*Neophytos*: neophyte. The word means newly planted.

Not a newly planted Christian; but one who is mature and who bears fruit. Young Christians rarely have the spiritual humility necessary to be a servant and might think they were deserving of their office by their own merits. Older Christians who are mature in their faith are usually quite a bit more humble.

Young Christians have not walked with the Lord long enough to learn how to depend on Him and His word; they have little spiritual wisdom.

### 2.16. Having a good testimony among those who are outside.

Here is one time the world is to make a decision in the church.

The elder must have a good "witness" (as a man of high morality and unquestionable ethics) in the world's eyes. It also implies that his lifestyle gains admiration from worldly men, in spite of the fact they live opposite to that lifestyle.

Satan will use an elder's poor reputation to bring disgrace on the church by having that issue of sin become public knowledge in the community.

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Charles Spurgeon wrote of a pulpiteer who was a good preacher but a bad Christian. He “preached so well and lived so badly, that when he was in the pulpit everybody said he ought never to come out again, and when he was out of it they all declared he never ought to enter it again.”

Colossians 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside . . .

### 3. **Tasking the elders of the church.**

Note that the requirements for an elder have nothing whatsoever to do with job description or ministry tasks, but everything to do with character qualities.

1 Peter 5:1-4

- 1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:
- 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;
- 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;
- 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

Acts 20:28-35

- 28 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to 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.
- 29 "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.
- 30 "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.
- 31 "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

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32 "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

33 "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.

34 "Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.

35 "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

### 3.1. Shepherd the flock of God: 1 Peter 5:2-3.

3.1.1. Managing their welfare.

3.1.2. With voluntary delight.

“ . . . not by compulsion, but willingly . . . .“

1 Thessalonians 5:12 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who **labor** among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,

The verb means to labor to the point of exhaustion. That is normal, average, shepherding. One cannot glory in the pastoral ministry or as an elder simply because he gets weary doing the work.

You dads and husbands, it is not to your praise that you exhaust yourself in caring for your families. That is only what God expects of you!

You moms, going to bed bone-weary is what is expected of you as you nurture your family!

3.1.3. Regardless of financial remuneration.

Is the church responsible to provide for the shepherd of the flock? Unquestionably yes!

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### 3.1.4. With humility.

This is not that pious self-humility (cf. Uriah Heep of *David Copperfield* fame).

Someone always downgrading themselves because of real or imagined sins is not humble, he is actually proud.

### 3.1.5. By an exemplary lifestyle.

Elders are to be examples to the flock of how simple godliness is lived out. There must be an appeal to such a lifestyle so that others desire it.

## 3.2. Guard the flock of God: Acts 20:28-35.

### 3.2.1. Against false teachers: vv. 29-31.

### 3.2.2. Against one's own carnal interests: vv. 32-35.

#### 3.2.2.1. Greed: v. 33.

#### 3.2.2.2. Laziness: vv. 34-35.

## 3.3. Feed the flock of God: John 21:17.

John 21:17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?"

Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?"

And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You."

Jesus said to him, "**Feed My sheep.**"

## 4. The cautions for elders of the church.

4.1. They have all the weaknesses of other men.

4.2. They are special targets of Satan.

4.3. Their fall causes greater harm.

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Zechariah 13:7 states a truism: strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.

- 4.4. Greater knowledge of the truth brings greater chastening for sin.
- 4.5. Greater opportunities for hypocrisy since they preach against the sins they commit.