

Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

1 TIMOTHY: DUTIES AND ORDER IN THE CHURCH, [1 Timothy 2:1-3:13](#)

The Overseers of the Church, [1 Timothy 3:1-7](#)

[\(1 Timothy 3:1-7\)](#) **Introduction:** the office of *bishop* is probably the same office as **elder** or **presbyter** or **minister** in the New Testament. All three words refer to the same person, to the minister of the gospel and of the church (see below [Deeper Study #1, Elder—Titus 1:5-9](#) for more discussion).

- 1) What are the qualifications of the minister?
- 2) Who should be preaching the gospel and filling the pulpits of the Lord's church?
- 3) Who should be considering the ministry—what kind of person?

The importance of this passage cannot be overstressed when it comes to the building and protection of God's church and people.

Paul moves from discussing the congregation ([1 Timothy 2:1-15](#)) to dealing with the pastors. The ministry, effectiveness, and testimony of any church are largely a reflection of its leaders. The principle of [Hosea 4:9](#), "And it will be, like people, like priest" is still true.

[Hosea 4:9 \(NASB\)](#)

⁹ And it will be, like people, like priest; So I will punish them for their ways And repay them for their deeds.

People do not normally rise above the level of their leaders. So important is it that those who lead the church *are* highly qualified spiritually that the detailed list of their specific qualifications is given twice in Paul's letters, here and in [Titus 1](#). Church leadership *is* at the core of New Testament teaching, since the Lord came into this world to build the church ([Matthew 16:18](#)).

[Matthew 16:18 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁸ I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock **I will build My church**; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

There is an **inseparable link** *between the character of a church and the quality of its leadership*. Leaders must set a godly example for the church to follow. Our Lord said in [Luke 6:40](#), "Everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher."

[Luke 6:40 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴⁰ A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.

Paul urged the Corinthians to “be imitators of me” ([1 Corinthians 4:16](#); cf. [1 Corinthians 11:1](#)).

[1 Corinthians 4:16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁶ Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.

[1 Corinthians 11:1 \(NASB\)](#)

¹ Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

To the Philippians he wrote, “The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things” ([Philippians 4:9](#)).

[Philippians 4:9 \(NASB\)](#)

⁹ The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

The church at Ephesus had been blessed with leadership of the highest caliber. It was founded by Paul, who ministered there for three years ([Acts 20:31](#)).

[Acts 20:31 \(NASB\)](#)

³¹ Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

During that time he trained a core of godly leaders ([Acts 20:17](#)) to lead the church after he left.

[Acts 20:17 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁷ From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.

As he foresaw, however, false leaders arose after his departure from Ephesus ([Acts 20:29-30](#)).

[Acts 20:29-30 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁹ I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

³⁰ and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

After his release from his first Roman imprisonment, Paul returned to Ephesus and dealt with two prominent ones ([1 Timothy 1:20](#)).

[1 Timothy 1:20 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁰ Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.

Leaving Timothy to deal with the rest and the other issues in the church, he set out for Macedonia ([1 Timothy 1:3](#)).

[1 Timothy 1:3 \(NASB\)](#)

³ As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,

Not long afterward, he wrote this letter to Timothy, directing him with a strategy to correct and build up the Ephesian church. At the heart of that task was the crucial need to reestablish a godly leadership. **Choosing the right elders was to be done by measuring men against a divinely inspired checklist of qualifications.**