

Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13 (11)

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?

Before discussing the individual qualifications against which all pastors are to be measured, however, Paul gives some helpful insight into the call to spiritual leadership.

1. The office of minister or bishop (v.1).
2. Personal qualifications (v.2-3).
3. Family qualifications: the minister or bishop must rule his own home (v.4-5).
4. Spiritual qualifications (v.6).
5. Community qualifications (v.7).

1. (1 Timothy 3:1) Minister— Bishop— Elder: the office of minister or bishop is a “good work.”

1 Timothy 3:1b (NASB)

¹ It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do*.

- It is an
- 1) important calling,
 - 2) a limited calling,
 - 3) a compelling calling,
 - 4) a responsible calling,
 - 5) a worthy calling, and
 - 6) **a demanding calling.**

A Demanding Calling

1 Timothy 3:1f (NASB)

¹ It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine **work** he desires to do.

The work of the ministry is such a serious undertaking that no man may enter it based solely on his own desire. Anyone who would lead the church must be set apart to that responsibility by the church when it clearly recognizes his giftedness, virtue, and service, by the standards given in [1 Timothy 3:2-7](#).

The sign that this recognition had occurred and a man had been set apart for the ministry in the early church was the laying on of hands (cf. [1 Timothy 4:14](#)).

The symbolism comes from the Old Testament, where the one offering a sacrifice identified with it by laying his hands on it. By laying hands on a candidate for the ministry, church leaders showed their unity and solidarity with him. They also gave him their commendation, support, and affirmation.

Paul strongly cautioned Timothy not to “lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thus share responsibility for the sins of others” ([1 Timothy 5:22](#)).

Those who ordain an unworthy man to the ministry share the responsibility for his sin. The early church took ordination very seriously. In [Acts 13:2](#) and [Acts 14:23](#) we read that prayer and fasting accompanied the setting apart of men for the ministry.

It was done in the early years by the apostles ([Acts 14:23](#)) and later by the elders of each congregation.

So spiritual oversight begins with a divine calling. Men, driven by an inner passion, actively seek to serve the church. The congregation either affirms or rejects that calling based on how the man’s life measures up to the standards the Holy Spirit has delineated in [1 Timothy 3:2-7](#).

1 Timothy 3:1 (NASB)

¹ It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a **fine work** he desires to do.

1 Timothy 3:1 (KJV)

¹ This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a **good work**.

The word “good” (*kalou*) means **honorable, excellent, beneficial, productive**. Note that the position of the ministry *is not* what is stressed, **but** the work of the ministry. The emphasis is not the esteem and honor of the profession. The emphasis is upon the work of the ministry. It is the work that is **honorable, excellent, beneficial, and productive**. The work of the ministry is a “good work.”

Note another fact: the office of minister or bishop is to be desired. The word “desire” means to seek after with a strong desire; to set one’s heart upon. God stirs some hearts to seek the ministry and to dedicate their lives to the work of the ministry.

Thought 1. When a person is stirred to commit his life to the ministry, he must say “yes” to the Spirit of God. To say “no” to God’s call is to reject God and to miss one’s calling and life. It is to miss one’s very purpose for being on earth. ([John 15:16](#); [1 Corinthians 12:31](#); [1 Corinthians 14:1](#); [1 Corinthians 14:12](#); [Ephesians 4:11-12](#)).