

# Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13 (15)

## 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.

- 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).

**2. (1 Timothy 3:2-3) Minister— Bishop— Elder: the minister or bishop of God must be qualified; he must meet some personal qualifications; he must be a person of great Christian character.**

1 Timothy 3:2-3 (NASB)

<sup>2</sup> An overseer, then, must be above reproach, **the husband of one wife**, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,  
<sup>3</sup> not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.

### The Overarching Requirement of a Godly Leader

In 1 Timothy 3:2-7, Paul lists four areas in which a man aspiring to church leadership may be evaluated as to whether he is **above reproach**. These have to do with **his moral character, home life, spiritual maturity, and public reputation**.

2. The minister or bishop must be “**the husband of one wife.**” From the earliest times of church history, this qualification has been interpreted differently.

Some have held.....

- 1) that the bishop or minister must have a wife; he must be married to be a minister.
- 2) that the bishop or minister must never have more than one wife; he must never marry again, even if his wife died. This position holds that second marriages are completely forbidden.
- 3) that the bishop must not have more than one wife at a time. (Remember: polygamy was the common practice of society when the church was first born).
- 4) that a bishop must live a life of strict morality; he **“must be a loyal husband, preserving marriage in all its purity”** (William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p.87).

**Thought 1.** Every minister, believer, and church must go before the Lord and seek the meaning of this qualification for him or herself. But we must be honest and open to hear the Lord and then beg of Him the courage and discipline to do what He says. This is an absolute essential for all who are believers, for nothing is any more traumatic than the loss of a spouse through death or separation and divorce. And if there is ever a time that we must reach out and minister to our brothers and sisters, it is when they lose their spouses.

**The point is this:** should a minister or bishop be allowed to serve as a minister if he has had more than one wife, either through death or divorce?

**The Pulpit Commentary** has an excellent comment on this point:

**“If we consider the general laxity in regard to marriage, and the facility of divorce, which prevailed among Jews and Romans at this time, it must have been a common thing for a man to have more than one woman living who had been his wife. And this [was] a distinct breach of the primeval law (Genesis 2:24), [and] would properly be a bar to any one being called to the 'office of a bishop'....It is utterly unsupported by any single passage in Scripture that a second marriage should disqualify a man for the sacred ministry. As regards the opinion of the early Church, it was not at all uniform, and amongst those who held that this passage absolutely prohibits second marriages in the case of a [bishop], it was merely a part of the asceticism of the day”** (Vol.21, p.51).

A.T. Robertson very simply says, **“Of one wife [*mias gunaikos*]. One at a time, clearly”** (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol.4, p.572).

William Barclay says, **“In its context here we can be quite certain that this means that the Christian leader must be a loyal husband, preserving marriage in all its purity”** (*The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p.87).

**Thompson Chain Reference Bible**, in listing its subjects, simply says **“Polygamy Forbidden.”**