

# 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.

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.**

The qualifications Paul gives in [1 Timothy 3:2-7](#) *are set against the backdrop of the unqualified leaders in Ephesus.*

He places God's standards against what the Ephesians had allowed the leadership to degenerate into. Some of the leaders were teaching false doctrine ([1 Timothy 1:3](#); [1 Timothy 4:1-3, 7](#); [1 Timothy 6:3-5](#)), turning aside to "fruitless discussion" ([1 Timothy 1:6](#)).

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

<sup>3</sup> 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,

#### [1 Timothy 4:1-3 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>1</sup> But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,

<sup>2</sup> by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,

<sup>3</sup> *men* who forbid marriage *and* advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.

**1 Timothy 4:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness;

**1 Timothy 6:3-5 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup> If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness,

<sup>4</sup> he is conceited *and* understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions,

<sup>5</sup> and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.

**1 Timothy 1:6 (NASB)**

<sup>6</sup> For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to **fruitless discussion** [vain jangling-KJV; idle talk-NKJV; meaningless talk-NIV; cul-de-sacs of gossip-The Message; talking foolishness-Living Bible; useless talk-God's Word ],

They misused the law and misunderstood the gospel ([1 Timothy 1:7-11](#)).

**1 Timothy 1:7-11 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.

<sup>8</sup> But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully,

<sup>9</sup> realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers

<sup>10</sup> and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,

<sup>11</sup> according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.

Some were women ([1 Timothy 2:12](#)), though that was forbidden by God's Word.

**1 Timothy 2:12 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup> But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

Others were guilty of sin, and needed public rebuke ([1 Timothy 5:20](#)).

**1 Timothy 5:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of *sinning*.

Now, here is the most important part of all of this that we need to understand.

All the qualifications he lists are **spiritual virtues, character traits that mark godly teachers and leaders**. He says nothing about the duties of the leaders, **but is concerned only with their spirituality, morality, and virtue as the necessary foundation to duty**. The duties were clear, the qualifications needed to be clarified.

All who serve as overseers or elders in the church must measure up to these standards, or face public discipline ([1 Timothy 5:20-24](#)).

**1 Timothy 5:20-24 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> **Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.**

<sup>21</sup> **I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of *His* chosen angels, to maintain these *principles* without bias, doing nothing in a *spirit of partiality*.**

<sup>22</sup> **Do not lay hands upon anyone *too* hastily and thereby share *responsibility* for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.**

<sup>23</sup> **No longer drink water *exclusively*, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.**

<sup>24</sup> **The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their *sins* follow after.**

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. This opening verse suggests six facets related to the call to ministry:

- 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.