

# Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

(22)

## 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 3:3 (NASB)

<sup>3</sup>Not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.

### **The Moral Character of a Godly Leader (continuation)**

**8. The minister or bishop must not be given to wine: not be a drunkard; not sit around drinking all the time.**

In order to justify their right to drink, some argue that drinking wine was a common practice in the ancient world even among true Christian believers.

However, we must always remember what **William Barclay** so forcefully points out about the ancient world:

**First**, the water supply was often inadequate and dangerous.

**Second**, “although the ancient world used wine as the commonest of all drinks it used it most abstemiously. When wine was drunk, it was drunk in the proportion of two parts of wine to three parts of water.

A man who was drunken would be disgraced in ordinary heathen society, let alone in the Church” (*The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p.91).

Oliver B. Greene pointedly says:

**“All believers should abstain from strong drink in any form, but especially should a bishop observe this admonition. Concerning wine, Paul's instruction to a bishop is very clear. He is not to participate in such practice. Greek scholars tell us that the word used here implies 'sitting over wine,' habitually drinking wine, as the people did in that day—even those who professed to be very religious. Not only for his own sake should a bishop abstain from the use of wine, but also for the sake of other believers”** (*The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to Timothy and Titus*. Greenville, SC: The Gospel Hour, 1964, p.114).

Another requirement for one who desires to be an elder is that he **not be addicted to wine**. This quality is not concerned with whether or not he gets drunk. Obviously, someone given to drunkenness would in no way be qualified for the ministry. An elder who is **not addicted to wine** is a man who does not have a reputation as a drinker. He doesn't frequent bars or involve himself in the scenes associated with drinking.

The Bible points out the tragic consequences when leaders are drinkers. Isaiah blasted the spiritual leaders of Israel for this very sin: **“And these also reel with wine and stagger from strong drink: The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are confused by wine, they stagger from strong drink; they reel while having visions, they totter when rendering judgment”** ([Isaiah 28:7 NASB](#)).

[Isaiah 56:9-12](#) adds,

[Isaiah 56:9-12 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> All you beasts of the field, All you beasts in the forest, Come to eat.....

A man who is a drinker has no place in the ministry. He is a poor example, and will surely be the cause of serious sin and disaster in the lives of others who follow his example as drinkers, justifying their indulgence because of their leader. A leader must be a man whose associations are radically different from those of the world, and whose example leads others to righteous conduct, not sin.

In ancient times most people consumed wine, since it was the staple liquid to drink. The water was impure, and mixing the wine with water not only significantly diluted the alcohol content, but purified the water. A mixture of eight parts water to one part wine was common, so as to avoid any dissipating effect.

Timothy was even reluctant to take the mixed wine, so as not to set an example that could cause someone to stumble. Thus, he was committed to abstinence, and Paul had to tell him, **“no longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments”** ([1 Timothy 5:23 NASB](#)). Drinking only water was contributing to his poor health. ([Luke 1:15](#); [Romans 14:21](#); [Leviticus 10:9](#); [Numbers 6:3](#); [Proverbs 23:31](#); [Proverbs 31:4](#); [Jeremiah 35:6](#); [Daniel 1:8](#))