

# Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

(31)

## 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).

#### 4. (1 Timothy 3:6) Proven— Novice— Minister— Bishop— Elder: the minister or bishop of God must be spiritually qualified.

1 Timothy 3:6 (NASB)

<sup>6</sup> *and not a new [novice] convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.*

He must not be a **novice** (*mē neophuton*), that is, a new convert or a new church member.

**He must have been a convert or church member for a long time.....**

1. long enough to have become rooted and grounded in the Lord and His Word.
2. long enough to have become spiritually mature.
3. long enough to have proven his testimony for Christ.
4. long enough to be well known and respected by other believers.
5. long enough to be able to minister to others and to teach them to minister.

Note why a novice must not be given a position of leadership in the church: lest he become prideful and “**fall into the condemnation of the devil.**” Satan was expelled from

heaven because of pride. It was pride that caused his fall and brought condemnation upon him. When a person is given a great responsibility before he has become rooted and grounded in the faith, he is most likely going to fall and be condemned just as Satan fell and was condemned.

We must always remember what **Matthew Henry** points out: **“Pride...is a sin that turned angels into devils”** (*Matthew Henry’s Commentary, Vol.6, p.815*). We must guard against pride. We must guard against putting a person in a position of leadership that will tempt him to feel more important than he is.

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

**<sup>6</sup>and not a new [novice] convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.**

Since one of the great dangers facing the overseer is pride, humility is an essential qualification. *Neophytos* (**new convert**) appears only here in the New Testament. It is used in extrabiblical Greek to refer to a newly planted tree, hence its metaphorical use here.

An elder must not be newly baptized as a Christian, **lest he become conceited**. Placing him in a leadership role would expose him to the temptation of pride. That would be especially true if he were elevated in a respected, established church like Ephesus.

That this qualification is absent from the list in **Titus 1** may reflect the fact that the churches on Crete were relatively new, made up of new believers. In that case, placing younger converts in leadership would not so readily lead to pride, since their fellow elders would be relatively new.

An elder, then, is to be drawn from the most spiritually mature in the congregation, but that maturity must be viewed in relationship to each individual congregation. The relative measure of spiritual maturity in an established church in the United States varies from that in a first-generation church in a third-world nation.

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

**<sup>6</sup>and not a new [novice] convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.**

**Conceited** is from *tuphoō*, which derives from a root word meaning **“smoke.”** The verb means **“to puff up like a cloud of smoke.”** Putting a new convert into a position of spiritual leadership is apt to puff him up, to put his head in the clouds.

That would place him in grave danger of falling **into the condemnation incurred by the devil**. That does not mean an individual is condemned by Satan, since the Bible never portrays him as a judge. It is best taken as an objective genitive; he falls into the same kind of judgment pronounced by God on Satan.

The context, which deals with the danger of pride, also lends support to that interpretation. The judgment or condemnation of the devil was a demotion from a high position due to his sinful pride. That is the danger awaiting the man placed in a position of spiritual leadership before he is ready. As **Proverbs 16:18 (NASB)** warns, **“Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before stumbling.”**