

Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

(34)

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 \(v.7\).](#)

5. (1 Timothy 3:7) Minister— Bishop— Elder: the minister or bishop must meet one very important community qualification.

1 Timothy 3:7 (NASB)

⁷ **And he must have a good reputation with those outside *the church*, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.**

By having a good reputation in the community, an elder will avoid **the snare of the devil**. The genitive here is subjective, and refers to the snare set by Satan. God does not set traps for his people (cf. James 1:13), but Satan would like nothing better than to set a trap to discredit a leader in the church.

James 1:13 (NASB)

¹³ **Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.**

D. Edmond Hiebert writes,

“For one who has an unsavory reputation in the community, to be placed by the church into a prominent place of authority would be to draw upon himself and

the church the reproach of the world. The suspicion and censure thus arrayed against him and the church might easily weaken and discourage the elder. Thus weakened and disheartened he might readily fall an easy prey into some skillfully laid snare of the Devil, who is here vividly pictured as a hunter of souls. Such a fall would cause great harm to his own soul and bring terrible damage to the church. The enemy's aim has always been to destroy the leaders of the church. Hence great care must be exercised in the selection of its leaders." (*First Timothy* [Chicago: Moody, 1957], 68)

Leaders face many temptations from the very nature of their position, without unnecessarily adding others.

First, they face the temptation to discouragement. Failing to live up to the high standards they set for themselves can bring discouragement. People who fail to grow or respond, who fall away, or fail to live up to the leader's expectations can also be a source of discouragement.

Second, leaders are tempted to indifference. That temptation is an outgrowth of the first one. Some leaders respond to discouragement by distancing themselves from people who could wound them with disappointments.

Third, leaders face the temptation of what might be termed "**busy laziness**." They take the path of least resistance and do what they want to do, not what they need to do. Though they appear to be busy, they are in reality lazy, since they do not discipline themselves to do what needs to be done.

Fourth, leaders are tempted to compromise. They avoid saying what ought to be said for the sake of pleasing men.

Fifth and finally, leaders face all the temptations common to other Christians. They, more than anyone, need to keep the armor of God on at all times (cf. [Ephesians 6:11](#)).

[Ephesians 6:11 \(NASB\)](#)

¹¹ **Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.**

To elevate someone prematurely to a leadership role is to expose him to temptation over and above that normally faced by leaders. A man in such a position is all too likely to fall into Satan's snare.

Ephesus needed to choose carefully its leaders, and so do we. We need to pray that God will raise up the men of His choosing. **The future of the church depends on it.**

An **anonymous poet** captured the process God uses to build His leaders in the following words:

When God wants to drill a man
And thrill a man
And skill a man,

When God wants to mold a man
To play the noblest part;
When He yearns with all His heart
To create so great and bold a man

That all the world shall be amazed,
Watch His methods, watch His ways!

How He ruthlessly perfects
Whom He royally elects!

How He hammers him and hurts him,
And with mighty blows converts him

Into trial shapes of clay which
Only God understands;
While his tortured heart is crying
And he lifts beseeching hands!

How He bends but never breaks
When his good He undertakes;

How He uses whom He chooses
And with every purpose fuses him;
By every act induces him

To try His splendour out—
God knows what He's about!

Acts 16:2-3 (NASB)

² and [Timothy] he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.

³ Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

Romans 1:8 (NASB)

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

1 Peter 3:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

Thought 1. A testimony before the world is essential. The world is not to choose or even have a voice in selecting church leaders. But church leaders must be respected by their day to day acquaintances. The point is *profession versus possession*. Those *outside* are the first to notice wrong behavior in a Christian. The Christian believer must behave like a Christian believer before he can serve as an overseer in God's church.