

Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

(8)

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?

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).

1. (1 Timothy 3:1) Minister— Bishop— Elder: the office of minister or bishop is a “good work.”

1 Timothy 3:1b (NASB)

¹ It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do*.

- 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.

A Responsible Calling

1 Timothy 3:1 (NASB)

¹ It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to **the office of overseer**, it is a fine work he desires *to do*.

Having oversight of the church is no small task, but rather a sobering responsibility. [Hebrews 13:17](#) warns that leaders must give an account to God for how faithfully they have led, while James adds that because they teach they face a stricter judgment ([James 3:1](#)).

Hebrews 13:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

James 3:1 (NASB)

¹ Let not many *of you* become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

Overseer translates *episkopos*, the term rendered **bishop** by the Authorized Version. In our day “**bishop**” has been encumbered with much ecclesiastical trapping. In the New Testament, however, the terms “**bishop**” (or **overseer**) referred to the same role as pastor and elder (cf. [Acts 20:28](#); [Titus 1:5-9](#); [1 Peter 5:1-2](#)).

Some have suggested that *episkopos* derives its sense from the city administrator, inspector, or financial manager of Greek culture. Its New Testament usage, however, more closely parallels that of the **Essene Jews of the Qumran community**. The overseers among the Essenes preached, taught, presided, exercised care and authority, and enforced discipline. Those functions more closely mirror that of the New Testament overseer than the more narrow use of the term in Greek culture.

What are the responsibilities of the overseer?

They are

- 1) to rule ([1 Timothy 5:17](#)),
- 2) to preach and teach ([1 Timothy 5:17](#)),
- 3) to pray for the sick ([James 5:14](#)),
- 4) to care for the church ([1 Peter 5:1-2](#)),
- 5) to be examples for others to follow ([1 Peter 5:1-2](#)),
- 6) to set church policy ([Acts 15:22](#)), and
- 7) to ordain other leaders ([1 Timothy 4:14](#)).