

Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

(9)

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 3:1e (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 Worthy Calling

1 Timothy 3:1e (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*.

The ministry is a **fine** (*kalos*), noble, honorable, excellent, high-quality **work**. It is a most worthy and glorious calling, as godly men have always recognized.

The **fourteenth-century English reformer John Wycliffe** wrote,

“The highest service that men may attain to on earth is to preach the Word of God. This service falls peculiarly to priests, and therefore God more straightly demands it of them... And for this cause, Jesus Christ left other works and occupied himself mostly in preaching, and thus did his apostles, and for this, God loved them...”

“The church, however, is honoured most by the preaching of God’s Word, and hence this is the best service that priests may render unto God... And thus, if our bishops preach not in their own persons, and hinder true priests from preaching, they are in the sins of the bishops who killed the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Cited in **Clyde E. Fant, Jr., and William M. Pinson, Jr., eds., 20 Centuries of Great Preaching** [Waco, Tex.: Word, 1971], 1:234)

The **seventeenth-century American Puritan Cotton Mather** agreed:

“The office of the Christian ministry, rightly understood, is the most honourable, and important, that any man in the whole world can ever sustain; and it will be one of the wonders and employments of eternity to consider the reasons why the wisdom and goodness of God assigned this office to imperfect and guilty man!... The great design and intention of the office of a Christian preacher are to restore the throne and dominion of God in the souls of men; to display in the most lively colours, and proclaim in the clearest language, the wonderful perfections, offices and grace of the Son of God; and to attract the souls of men into a state of everlasting friendship with him... It is a work which an angel might wish for, as an honour to his character; yea, an office which every angel in heaven might covet to be employed in for a thousand years to come. It is such an honourable, important and useful office, that if a man be put into it by God, and made faithful and successful through life, he may look down with disdain upon a crown, and shed a tear of pity on the brightest monarch on earth.” (Cited in **Stott, Between Two Worlds, 31**)

The **twentieth-century English preacher Will Sangster** wrote of the ministry:

“Called to preach!... Commissioned of God to teach the Word! A herald of the great King! A witness of the eternal gospel! Could any work be more high and holy? To this supreme task God sent His only begotten Son. In all the frustration and confusion of the times, is it possible to imagine a work comparable in importance with that of proclaiming the will of God to wayward men?...

Not by accident, nor yet by the thrustful egotism of men, was the pulpit given the central place in the Reformed Churches. It is there of design and devotion. It is there by the logic of things. It is there as “*the throne of the Word of God.*” (**W. E. Sangster, *The Craft of the Sermon* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1951], 24, 17; italics in original)**)

The work of preaching and leading the church, which our Lord purchased with His blood, is the highest and the greatest and the most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called.