

# 1 Timothy 3:1-7 – Qualifications of Elders & Deacons

Michael Silva / May 28, 2017

**Opening:** Leadership is important!

- Germany post-WWI (Great War), a demonstration that leadership is important.
  - Germany had been decimated in the Great War and Hitler came in as strong leader and gave the Germany people hope. Sadly, he misled them right back into destruction.
- Netflix series, Daredevil, as he rids his city of one crime lord, another immediately rises up to fill that void and take their place.

**Transition:** We are on a Journey... in the book of 1 Timothy, which has a lot to say about church leadership, doctrine, and **discipleship**.

1. Paul wrote this letter to young Pastor Timothy to encourage & instruct him in [how to deal with false teachers](#) within the church at Ephesus.
2. Throughout this letter, we will see that as disciples, we are to be [grounded](#) in and [guided](#) by the gospel and right doctrine.
  - a) As disciples of Christ, we are called to [live out the realities](#) of the gospel in our lives.

**Let's read our passage: [1 Timothy 3:1-13 \(NKJV\)](#)<sup>i</sup> And Pray...**

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer. - Psalm 19:14*

1. What qualifies someone to be a pastor/leader over the church?
  - a) Many churches require a Master of Divinity degree.
  - b) Usually 5 or more years of experience is expected.
  - c) Pastoral search committees often look for someone who has a charismatic personality and speaks well.
  - d) They want sermon samples to see how well you preach the word.
  - e) One of the chief criteria for selection is having a candidate come preach at one of their services.
    - i) If they like what they hear and see they will extend a job offer.
2. While these measures are not bad, they are not necessarily biblical either.
  - a) In today's passage, we find the biblical qualification for pastor/leaders in the church.

- b) In 1 Timothy 2 Paul explained that women are not to serve in the role of teaching and pastoral leadership over the church.
- c) That does not mean that any man therefore is qualified.
- d) Only certain men are qualified and gifted to preach, teach, and lead the church.

**1 Timothy 3:1** <sup>1</sup> This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

1. The word **bishop** means overseer - One who watches over and cares for others.
  - a) In the New Testament, we find that the words Bishop, Elder, Overseer, and Pastor are used interchangeably and are synonymous in meaning.
    - i) Further the qualifications are the same.
2. Note the word **desire**.
  - a) Important Question is: What is the source of that desire to become a pastor?
    - i) If it's a desire to for recognition...
    - ii) If it's a prideful desire to be over others...
    - iii) If it's a desire to make money off the generosity of those in the church...
      - (1) Then those desires are not from the Lord.
  - b) It is the Lord who creates that **desire** and places it in the hearts of those He is calling into the ministry.
3. The importance of these words in Paul's day: Becoming a Christian meant that you were potentially risking everything.
  - a) Christians could be disowned from their families.
  - b) They could lose their jobs.
  - c) They were certain to face persecution leading to imprisonment or even death.
  - d) It was especially dangerous to become the leader/pastor of such a despised group.
    - i) Many would say it's crazy to be a bishop.
    - ii) Instead, Paul declares that desiring to be a bishop is actually a good work.
4. Note along with the word desire is also the word **work**.

- a) Ministry is not a cakewalk. I hear people joke, “It must be nice to only have to work one day a week.”
  - b) I can say that being a pastor has been harder than being a Marine.
  - c) In the Marines, it was obviously more physically demanding. But being a pastor is much or spiritually challenging, which effects emotions and even physical strength and energy.
  - d) John MacArthur wrote, “Those looking for an easy time will not find it in the ministry.”
  - e) Have you heard the phrase, “Leave work at work when it’s time to leave at the end of the day.”?
    - i) It doesn’t work that way with ministry.
    - ii) Yes, there are times that I set aside certain responsibilities to make sure I am spending time with my family.
  - f) But that doesn’t work when someone loses their parents in a house fire or their loved one goes into the hospital.
    - i) There is a weight that pastors’ carry in ministering to the flock.
5. This is the verse that really encouraged me to pursue ministry.
- a) I felt called to start a church and this verse helped encourage me to pursue that calling.
  - b) I had just been selected for promotion to Captain as a Marine Officer, yet I knew my calling was clear, I desired [a good work](#).

**1 Timothy 3:2a**      <sup>2</sup> A bishop then must be blameless,

1. The word [blameless](#) can also be translated as *above reproach*. It means ‘not held.’
  - a) The idea is that if an accusation were made against you, it would not hold up.
  - b) Your life and conduct as a pastor should be such that people should not have any reason to doubt, questions, or accuse a pastor of wrongdoing.
2. This requires spiritual maturity from the pastor/leader that is developed in a close walk with the Lord.
  - a) It’s something that is grounded in a constant and careful study of God’s word.
  - b) But this is not a call to perfection, just the pursuit of it.
  - c) Paul did not say that a bishop should be flawless, just blameless.
3. All the following traits are qualities of one who is blameless...

**1 Timothy 3:2b** ...the husband of one wife,

1. In the original language, it's a one-woman man.
2. Some have thought this might mean...
  - a) That a bishop/elder/pastor should be married. This is not the case.
    - i) Nor does this say that a bishop/elder/pastor must remain single and take a vow of celibacy.
  - b) Some have thought this means that someone who is divorced and remarried cannot serve as a pastor.
    - i) This could be true, in part, depending on some additional circumstances.
  - c) Some have suggested that if a minister's wife passes away he is not free to remarry, but should remain a widow. Again, not the case.
  - d) Some have suggested that this was said because polygamy was practiced in first century Rome.
    - i) This is in part true, but I am not persuaded that this is why he includes this qualification.
3. In the context of this passage, this is a qualification, that addresses moral character, not marital status.
  - a) What this means is that a man in leadership should be devoted to the woman who is his wife.
  - b) How can a pastor love and care for the bride of Christ, the church, if he cannot or will not love and properly care for his own bride?
  - c) Sadly, this is where many church leaders fail and fall. They entertain some in appropriate relationship with someone who is not their wife and they become disqualified.
  - d) The men who are church leaders should be leading by example in loving their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. (Eph 5:25)
    - i) These men should be finding and actively cultivating their fulfillment sexually and emotionally in one woman alone, his wife.

**1 Timothy 3:2c** ...temperate,

1. Literally: abstaining from wine, either entirely or at least from its immoderate use.
  - a) NBC News recently reported that: Heavy drinking is on the rise in many parts of the U.S. — up more than 17 percent since 2005, researchers reported Thursday. And rates are rising faster among women than among men.<sup>ii</sup>
  - b) The Washington Post reported in December Alcohol deaths have reach a 35-year high.<sup>iii</sup>
    - i) Part of that report said, in 2014, more people died from alcohol-induced causes (30,722) than from

overdoses of prescription painkillers and heroin combined (28,647), according to the CDC.

c) Church leaders need to understand that they should never allow their liberty in Christ to stumble another.

i) 1 Corinthians 10:23–24                      23 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. 24 Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.

ii) This is why Sonya and I have chosen to abstain from drinking.

iii) It's just easier to abstain than to explain why I am drinking a beer at the BBQ.

2. Church leaders should be temperate so that they do not stumble others, but they should also be temperate so that they can possess this next trait...

**1 Timothy 3:2d**                      ...sober-minded,

1. This describes one who is able to think clearly with clarity.

a) How can we think clearly if we have been hitting the bottle?

b) This word in the original Greek also carries the meaning of being self-controlled or serious minded.

i) This doesn't mean the pastor can't have a sense of humor, he will need one!

ii) It means he's a leader who knows how to be serious when the time calls for it.

iii) Rick, John, Jacob, and I will joke and tease one another before and after service.

iv) But we didn't do that when Ms. Marliee's family came in for the memorial service last Sunday.

(1) That's being sober-minded.

**1 Timothy 3:2e**                      ...of good behavior,

1. The word means orderly or even modest.

a) There should be a maturity about the way that a pastor/leader conducts themselves and the ministry they lead.

b) Sadly, some churches have allowed pastors who are amazing speakers to remain in place, even though his behavior outside the pulpit is inappropriate.

c) That should not be so.

**1 Timothy 3:2f** ...hospitable,

1. This literally means “Loving Strangers.”
  - a) This was incredibly important in the first century church for two reasons...
    - i) Inns and lodges were often not safe places to stay. They often served as brothels.
    - ii) Christian persecution forced many to have to pack up and move, like refugees and they would need a place to stay as they wandered into a new city.
2. The idea behind being hospitable is that a pastor, elder, bishop, loves people.
  - a) Some ministers have said, “Ministry would be great if it weren’t for the people.”
    - i) Well, without the people there would be no ministry.
    - ii) The minister must love people or he’s missing an essential qualification for leading.
  - b) But don’t make the mistake of thinking that a minister must be an extrovert.
    - i) An introvert can be hospitable, it’s just going to look different.
    - ii) It may be on a smaller or intimate scale.
    - iii) The difference being that the extrovert is hospitable in large groups of people all at the same time whereas the introverted leader does better connecting with just a few people at a time.

**1 Timothy 3:2g** ...able to teach;

1. Jesus told Peter, “Feed my sheep.” (John 21:17).
  - a) Acts 6, where we see the first deacons selected illustrates that one of the primary roles of the pastor/elder is his teaching ministry.
  - b) He must be one who prepares carefully and teaches faithfully.
2. If you feel called to pastoral ministry, a great place to develop your gift of teaching, if you have that gift, is by serving in the children’s ministry.
  - a) That’s how my pastor, Rick Barnett developed his gift of teaching.
    - i) It’s how I developed my gift of teaching.
  - b) Teaching is not simply regurgitating someone else’s commentary of a passage.
    - i) It is taking a passage and explaining it so that your group at that particular time can understand it.

**1 Timothy 3:3a**      <sup>3</sup> not given to wine,

1. Again, the issue of alcohol is addressed. This is not having a dependence upon alcohol to unwind, relax, or to think clearly.
  - a) This happens more than you might think.
  - b) Recently a prominent in South Carolina had to step down because he was depending more on alcohol at the end of the day than Jesus.

**1 Timothy 3:3b**      ...not violent,

1. Because pastoral ministry is reserved for men, here's a trait that men must be intentional in practicing.
  - a) We can get angry which can easily lead to rage.
  - b) But God's minister in the church must not be violent, or one who strikes people or things.
    - i) Guys, this includes throwing things, slamming things, breaking things...

**1 Timothy 3:3c**      ...not greedy for money,

1. Leaders in the church should be more focused on ministering to people rather than making money.
  - a) If you want to make lots of money, pursue another vocation.
  - b) That said, it is not wrong for ministers to receive compensation from the church if the church is able to pay a salary. (1 Tim 5:17-18)

**1 Timothy 3:3d**      ...but gentle, not quarrelsome,

1. Wiersbe: This does not mean they must compromise their convictions, but that they must "disagree" without being "disagreeable." Short tempers do not make for long ministries.

**1 Timothy 3:3e**      ...not covetous;

1. This is more than just money our wealth in view here.
  - a) Church leaders can easily covet popularity, more people, a better position.
  - b) The faithful minister is content right where he is at.

- i) He's not viewing his present setting as a stepping block to the next better thing.

**1 Timothy 3:4-5** <sup>4</sup> one who rules his own house well, having *his* children in submission with all reverence <sup>5</sup> (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);

1. A leader must be able to prioritize. There will always be more things to do, than time and money will permit.
  - a) In the life of a minister, his family remains a top priority that he must make time for.
  - b) Sadly, many ministers neglect his own family as he tries to care for the family of God.
  - c) Overlooked and under-love children often rebel in such situations.
  - d) When that happens, it calls into question a leader's priorities and his ability to lead the church...
    - i) for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?
2. But there are also times when a minister has been faithful husband and father.
  - a) He has invested time in discipling his wife and children, yet despite all his efforts in pointing them to Christ, the children walk in the way of rebellion for a season.
    - i) I don't think that situation necessitates that man's removal from ministry.
    - ii) He should step down if he needs more time with his family.
    - iii) But if he is doing all he can, but it's being resisted, I think it might be completely appropriate that he remain in his ministry.

(1) [Elder in Iwakuni who asked to step down]

**1 Timothy 3:6** <sup>6</sup> not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the *same* condemnation as the devil.

1. Novice – newly planted. It is not related to physical age, but rather spiritual maturity.
  - a) New converts who are given too much responsibility too quickly can become prideful like Lucifer leading up to his fall.
  - b) Lucifer's mistake: **Isaiah 14:13–14** <sup>13</sup> For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; <sup>14</sup> I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'

- c) New converts are susceptible to thinking that they are successful because of who they are instead of realizing that all fruit in ministry is a result of who He is.

**1 Timothy 3:7** <sup>7</sup> Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

1. How is a potently minister known outside of the church?
  - a) Does he pay his bills?
  - b) Does he hold down a job and do it well?
  - c) Is he respected in his neighborhood?
2. What you do outside the church will often find its way into the church becoming a reproach and snare of the devil.
  - a) Therefore, a minister must also have a **good testimony among those who are outside.**

**Conclusion: What's the big take away from this passage?**

1. Stuart Briscoe<sup>iv</sup> summarized the qualifications of a pastor in three simple statements:
  - a) He must have the mind of a scholar
  - b) The heart of a child.
  - c) Hide of a rhinoceros.
2. While there must be qualification for leaders in the church, there can often be an unrealistic expectation placed upon pastors.
  - a) I want to close by sharing some thoughts from Paul David Tripp.

**Invitation: Revelation 3:20** Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

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<sup>i</sup> All scripture references, unless otherwise noted, are taken from The New King James Version. (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.  
<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/americans-are-drinking-more-lot-more-n347126>  
<sup>iii</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/12/22/americans-are-drinking-themselves-to-death-at-record-rates/?utm\\_term=.b1841bad6786](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/12/22/americans-are-drinking-themselves-to-death-at-record-rates/?utm_term=.b1841bad6786)  
<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2003/may-online-only/cln30528.html>