

The Text

1 Timothy 3:1-7 (CSB) This saying is trustworthy: “If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work.” An overseer, therefore, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not an excessive drinker, not a bully but gentle, not quarrelsome, not greedy. He must manage his own household competently and have his children under control with all dignity. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of God’s church?) He must not be a new convert, or he might become conceited and incur the same condemnation as the devil. Furthermore, he must have a good reputation among outsiders, so that he does not fall into disgrace and the devil’s trap.

The Meditation

Let us look at both the Elder (Overseer) and the Deacon.

The qualifications of an overseer

An overseer or an elder of the church. The King James calls this, "bishop". The Greek word simply means, "supervisor". Whatever term you want to use, let us look how these qualifications should impact and change the way we live our lives.

This saying is trustworthy: “If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work.”

This sort of ministry is not thrust upon an unsuspecting, unwilling man. As my friend (who is an pilot in the US Air Force) likes to say, "volun-told". Elders are not "voluntold" to be an elder. They must aspire to be an overseer.

But it is not blind ambition. What I mean by that is that the desire not simply one sided. The man must want to be an elder but the church itself must want him as their elder.

As I write this, I have been saved by God for just 14 years nearing the age of 46. I have longed to serve my local church as an elder. But here is the stone cold truth: I have never been given grace by God nor grace by my local church to be in this elder.

You know what? That is more than okay. As time passes, I have started to grasp one truth in life, "Where does God's grace have me at right now?" Once I figure that out, I go and do. In other words, I may not be able to preach on a Sunday morning. But I can write books and blog posts about the glory of God and His great love for us all the live long day. If that is the grace I have, then that is what I get to do.

But I digress.

An overseer, therefore, must be above reproach

Do not confuse this with "above approach". No minister--elder, shepherd, evangelist, teacher, pastor, whatever--should never be above approach. That would actually disqualify you from this office.

To be above reproach, by definition, is to be "above disapproval or disappointment". Wow. That seems to set the bar way low. But if you have been in church or been paying attention to the church culture at large for more than a minute, you know that way too many ministers stumble and fail. The phrase, "fall from grace" gets thrown around a lot. I suggest we start saying, "I was disappointed when my pastor decided to sin against God rather than turn to God."

You might be asking, "Well, everybody sins. Is the Bible calling all elders to be perfect?" No. Just above disappointment. Stop me when this sounds familiar: when one sins, run back to God.

The Christian is empowered to do so. The minister must be a Christian. Therefore, the minister must be empowered to repent.

Sadly, "falling from grace" always means that the minister decided, day after day, which turns into months and years, not to turn to God and instead, turn into their sin.

the husband of one wife

I read this not as strictly "must be married" and to wholesale reject any single, divorced, or widowed men.

You know how I would read this in light of the entire Bible?

1 Corinthians 6:18 (CSB) Flee sexual immorality! Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body.

An elder is one who flees from sexual sin. Single. Divorced. Married. Widowed. It matters not. If you are bought with the blood of Christ, we have the power of the Spirit to flee all sin including sexual sin.

I don't think it is a coincidence that this passage from the end of 1 Corinthians 6 came to mind. If you are familiar with Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, he just said:

1 Corinthians 6:15-17 (CSB) Don't you know that your bodies are a part of Christ's body? So should I take a part of Christ's body and make it part of a prostitute? Absolutely not! Don't you know that anyone joined to a prostitute is one body with her? For Scripture says, The two will become one flesh. But anyone joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.

And then he will go on to say:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (CSB) Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.

And then finally address married and unmarried folk in chapter 7.

I don't think that is a coincidence.

self-controlled, sensible, respectable

Galatians 5:22-23 (CSB) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things.

These qualifications alone filters out the unqualified. These are not throwaway qualifications. I dare you to ask the Holy Spirit if He would call you self-controlled, sensible and respectable. Are you so at home? What about with your wife? What about with your kids? What about with the wait staff at your favorite restaurant?

This virtues are no doubt internal but the effects of virtues from the heart always find a way to affect your relationships--in good and bad ways. If you are indeed self-controlled, people who know you will know. If you are sensible and respectable, your family and friends will instinctively be able to answer one way or another.

hospitable, able to teach

Along with "supervising" the church, there are two tasks of the elder:

hospitality - Are you inviting? Do you welcome people often? It doesn't mean just in your home. Lunches, coffee, or even including people in weekend activities. Keep it real: some people are not. They rather be alone most of the time and have limited capacity for others. That is okay. Introverted or extroverted, the task of the elder is someone who is inviting others into their own life.

able to teach - The litmus test on this is not whether you can teach thousands of people at one time. Can you teach doctrine and theology one on one? Can you articulate the gospel and its implications to a few people at one time. What about a class on a book of the Bible? Then by the Spirit of God alone, you might be able to teach.

not an excessive drinker, not a bully but gentle, not quarrelsome, not greedy

These are external marks of an elder. By external, I mean that these are some traits that can also be recognized by the general public at large. You might be one way in front of church folk. But what about people at the coffee shop, in the grocery stores or even online? The larger audience can bear witness on whether or not you should help oversee His church.

must manage his own household competently and have his children under control with all dignity. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of God's church?)

Take a walk through your home, budget, and the general "adulting" things that need to get done: are they getting done?

must not be a new convert, or he might become conceited and incur the same condemnation as the devil

Speaking on a personal level: I know this verse was put in for me. I got saved in 2007. And within a year, I was started to be groomed to be a minister--within the context of that church. I sit now and see the grace and mercy of God in my life since then and I know that I know if I was a minister, pastor, preacher, elder in any way, it would have been disastrous. It is only now I can thank God for doing what He can only do: heal my soul, heart, and mind from childhood trauma.

must have a good reputation among outsiders, so that he does not fall into disgrace and the devil's trap

And if excessive drinker, bully, and quarrelsome is not enough, then what about the minister's general reputation with his neighborhood and people within the city. What would they say?

Does everyone meet these qualifications? No. Should every Christian check themselves against this list? Absolutely so. I feel like these and the qualifications for the deacon are practical explanation of the fruit of the Spirit.

The Gospel

The Prayer

JESUS CHRIST. THE HEAD PASTOR OF THE CHURCH

If you called us
to do your will
give us your grace
to do your will.

FATHER

Give us your Spirit
exactly how you gave to your Son
to minister, care, and love one another,
to proclaim the gospel
to every creature
to the end of the earth.

More so,
give me your Son
who lived and died for me
who rose so that I would be fully alive
who rules and reigns over all the earth
who has called me to do his will
who intercedes for me
who will be with me
till the end of the age.

I love you
forever I will love you
because you have loved me first.

Amen.