

The Qualities of Pastors (continued)

Let's continue our look at the qualities of pastors from 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, not only to comply with God's requirements, but also to learn more about the nature of the role.

3:2, He must be "**temperate.**" The KJV mistranslates this rare word as "vigilant." While vigilance is certainly a good thing, the Greek word nephalion is defined as a person "not given to excess."

This word most naturally describes one's attitude toward alcohol, but by New Testament times, it described moderation in other areas of life as well. We could fairly apply it to food, television, hobbies, and any activity prone to a loss of self-control. An elder must be a man of restraint, who sails on an even keel, who lives in the world and yet is enslaved by no worldly thing (2 Pet. 2:19).

Since the elder will often counsel those whose passions are getting out of check, it is helpful to be able to share practical advice on how to master one's choices and circumstances, rather than being mastered by them.

3:2, He must be "**prudent.**" Several Greek dictionaries say that the word sophron means literally "of sound mind; possessing inner self-government." It is basically a synonym for "having self-control," and overlaps the previous word "temperate."

3:2, He must be "**respectable.**" You can see the word "cosmos" hidden in the Greek adjective kosmion. It literally means "well-arranged, in an orderly fashion."

You might see in it the disciplined motion of the stars. When applied to people, it refers to a life that is attractive because it is organized.

It's good to know how to juggle a lot of tasks without dropping them. But more to the point here is a life organized according to spiritual priorities. An elder needs to demonstrate how to put the kingdom first in a world full of distractions; how to worship regularly and work in God's kingdom without allowing salary, lawn care, extracurricular activities, hobbies, and the like, from encroaching. Having one's life in godly order is respectable in the world and the church alike.

3:2, He must be "**hospitable.**" It's a struggle to open one's home to visiting preachers, to invite the brethren in for supper (or, in Paul's day, to host the congregation), or to ask a struggling member to come over and talk. Hospitality is an inconvenience in this age of privacy, and is a great measure of a man's love of the brethren. Hospitality takes lots of time, effort, and vacuuming, and few are willing to devote themselves to it (1 Peter 4:9, Heb. 13:2, Rom. 12:13). Since an elder must be in contact with the saints, having them over to his house will be helpful.

Interestingly, the Greek word philoxenon is literally "love of strangers." While we

should not fall for the Greek-root fallacy of viewing this as one's attitude toward foreigners—it really just means “welcoming, hospitable”—the roots do show why hospitality is so difficult to practice. It's easy to hang out with friends; it's an effort to broaden the circle and reach out to others.

3:2, He must be **“able to teach.”** This phrase is one adjective in Greek, *didaktikon*. It refers to one's willingness and ability to proclaim the details of the gospel.

Paul devotes much more ink to this in Titus, saying in **1:9**, **“holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”** Obviously there is no shortcut around this. Bible knowledge takes time to accumulate, and the ability to communicate and defend the truth takes practice. An elder must devote time to God's word, and be able at minimum to ably fill in the pulpit, regularly teach a Bible class, and confidently explain the gospel to a seeker.

The shepherd's function as a guardian is on display here too, because “those who contradict” usually arise from within rather than from without. He must be able to spot false doctrine, and bravely refute it in a firm yet loving manner. This should not be something he resolves to do; it should be something he has already been busy doing. Ideally, he makes it his business to know the NT as well as the preacher does.

3:3, He must not be **“addicted to wine.”** The Greek phrase *me paroinon* means literally, by the roots, “one who does not sit long at wine.” Intoxication is utterly incompatible with the example of an elder.

Many rush to point out that drinking a little wine with dinner is not prohibited here. But in today's America, I would hope (as I have explained in other lessons) that a man who desires to lead the church would be willing to utterly abstain for the sake of his example. I hope that of every Christian, really.

3:3, He must not be **“pugnacious.”** The KJV translates *me plekton* as “not a striker,” but this isn't limited to fist-fights. In dealings with the brethren, there will be many opportunities for rancor, grudge-bearing, anger, and lashing out. An elder cannot have a quick temper or rash tongue; he must calmly handle these situations, having first in his mind the health of the church, and first in his heart the fate of the person who causes his blood pressure to rise. “The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will” (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

3:3, He must be **“gentle”** and **“uncontentious.”** The subtle qualities of *epieike* and *amachon* separate those leaders who promote happy cooperation and those who cause friction and spite. A good elder must have learned from raising his own family how to balance firmness with gentleness, discipline with love, frowns with smiles. He must

know how to pick his battles. He must, like Jesus, absorb insults aimed at him personally, but speak out boldly when insults are aimed at God.

3:3, He must be **“free from the love of money.”** This is all one word in Greek, *aphilarguron*, from the roots “not-lover-silver.” This emphasizes the man’s attitude toward money—he must not be greedy or preoccupied with materialism. Obviously, since elders will be handling the church’s finances, he must be trustworthy.

This has less to do with his personal worth, and more to do with what he does with it. A poor man can be consumed by the love of money, while a man who built a successful business can be humble and giving. Furthermore, an elder will have to be focused on God’s low-paying but highly-fulfilling work, rather than on making money. There will be times when an elder will have to leave work early to put out fires, visit the hospital, or attend to a spiritual emergency. *--John Guzzetta*