

The Qualities of Pastors (concluded)

Let's conclude 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.

3:4–5, He must be one who **“manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity.”** There is a reason that this is usually the first qualification people think about—nothing speaks to a man's preparation to lead the church as loudly as his leadership of his own family. Paul reasons: “If a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?”

This is so much more than just, “did he force his kids to attend worship so long as they were under his roof?” This is about influence. Did he model the person of Christ in his own life, or did his children see that the old man was a different person at home and in the car than he was at church? Did he take the time to speak to his children about the Lord (Deut. 6:7) or did he leave that responsibility to others? Did he help his children develop a faith of their own, so that they would become devoted to Christ throughout their adult lives, too? Did he appreciate the danger of the world and protect them from the worst elements of it (1 Cor. 15:33); did he have the self-confidence and concern to put his foot down and prohibit them watching trash, to prohibit them running around with worldly people at 3:00am, when little goes on that is wholesome?

Now, each situation is different, and children are free moral agents who eventually make up their own minds. I don't mean to sound harsh; I speak humbly, fully appreciating that my own leadership has not yet been tested. But the responsibility of leading a wife and children through the world toward heaven is identical to the responsibility of leading a church—it is to feed and protect. In fact, in the Greek, the word “manage” is the same as the word “rule” in 1 Tim. 5:17.

For that reason, I am most comfortable with viewing this as a results-based qualification. Not just: did his kids behave while they were under his thumb? But: did he impart to them a faith of their own? Are they Christians now? After all, you can often judge the quality of a man's work after his direct influence is taken away (Phil. 2:12, 1 Cor. 3:10-15).

Paul's letter to Titus is in some ways even more challenging, saying an elder must “have children who believe,” (1:6). The Holy Spirit took all the guesswork out of an elder-candidate's effectiveness in leadership, and invites us to simply look at the results.

3:6, He must not be a **“new convert.”** Neophytos literally means “newly planted.” There is no specific amount of time demanded in Scripture, but it will take a while to mature in Christ and earn the confidence of brethren. A man appointed too soon may become puffed up with pride, thinking of his position as yet another feather in his cap, alongside athletic trophies, club presidencies, and political appointments. The eldership is really about service, not accepting praise (Matt. 20:28, 23:10).

3:7, He must **“have a good reputation with those outside the church.”** This does not suggest a man who has never undergone persecution from the world due to his faith. Instead, it refers to a man whose good Christian character is well-known to the community. He is a shining light

to the people he meets—his neighbors, his teammates, his coworkers, his grocer, his mailman.

The qualifications of elders listed in Paul’s letter to Titus are similar to those in 1 Timothy, though a side-by-side comparison brings out a few extra details.

Titus 1:7, He must not be **“self-willed,”** that is, stubborn or arrogant. The selfless mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5–8) will be required to make the efforts and sacrifices necessary to lead the church. An elder must also have a forbearing spirit to yield his will to others when an issue is not a crucial one. He must be open to the suggestions and concerns of the congregation in practical matters without getting his feelings hurt (Prov. 15:22).

1:8, He must **“love what is good.”** An elder must not be involved in evil, or smirk at it. His charge is to encourage the members of the congregation toward righteousness, not to snicker knowingly or shrug his shoulders when a member is involved in sin.

1:8, He must be **“just.”** An elder must be fair in his dealings with others, without favoritism.

1:8, He must be **“devout.”** An elder must be reverent and involved in worship. He will make worship services a priority. He will not be chronically late, nor play on his smart phone during singing. He will pray often in private due to the anxieties weighing on him for care of the church, as one “who will give an account” (Heb. 13:17).

May I attempt to sum up the qualities that the Holy Spirit revealed, in my own words? A shepherd is one who loves God unquestionably, and has studied his Bible thoroughly; one who views people as eternal souls destined for Heaven or Hell, and talks to people—especially his own family—directly but patiently about important things; one who lives in this world uprightly, and prays often for strength; one who knows the way to go, and has the self-confidence to expect others to follow.

My prayer is that this congregation will always encourage the elders we have, and with all haste and diligence, develop the elders of the near future! We will need more if we are to grow. -- *John Guzzetta*