

# Body Life - #3

## The Qualifications and Duties of Elders and Deacons – Part One

**Introduction** – We are considering the work of the church, which Paul calls “*the pillar and ground of the truth*”. Church leadership looks so different from fellowship to fellowship primarily because we fail to submit to the teaching of the Word. So much of the hypocrisy, weakness and waywardness of the church can be directly blamed on our failure to submit to the scriptural qualifications and duties for the offices of the church.

**Qualifications of Elders** (1 Tim 3:1-7) – Elders (bishops, pastors, overseers) are shepherds and must be qualified in doctrine and character in order to rule and teach well. We are all called to look to our elders, to consider the outcome of their faith, and to imitate them. These lists of qualifications tell us what we are to require of men who would be leaders in the church, but they are also a list of the kinds of things we all are to be imitating. He must be, and we must strive to be -

**‘blameless’** – With regard to his Christian life in general and the following list in particular, the grace of God is manifest in such a way that this man is not open to attack or criticism.

**‘the husband of one wife’** – The first area listed where he must be above reproach is in his marital and sexual life. This requires marital faithfulness for those married and sexual purity for all. Literally, he is a ‘one-woman man’, and this emphasizes his devotion to his wife. He is not a flirt or a voyeur, and he is satisfied with the wife of his youth.

**‘temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior’** – These words cascade around the same ideas. This man is self-controlled and balanced in his judgment. He is prudent, sensible, and discreet. He is a man who can be trusted to handle serious and complex issues as he cares for his flock. It does not mean that he is not zealous or passionate for the truth and for his people, but it does mean that he is always principled in his actions.

**‘hospitable’** – How could you consider the outcome of his faith if he were not? His actions display a heart that longs to open up his home and his life to those he has been entrusted to care for. And he believes that God uses his home-life as a means to bless others.

**‘able to teach’** (see Tit 1:9) – In Titus, Paul leaves this to the last, as though in that situation it was the reason qualified men were needed. And in many ways, this is our great need as well. We need men who understand and are able to teach and defend the whole counsel of God, for we desperately need the truth brought to bear in every area of our lives.

**‘not given to wine’** – This man is not controlled by other substances. It is not a call to a prohibition of such things. It is a demand that those things never have you in their grip.

**‘not greedy for money...not covetous’** – Just like above, the issue is not whether he has money, but whether money has him. Elders must model a content faith in whatever station God has placed them.

**‘not violent...but gentle, not quarrelsome’** – Since the day Cain killed Abel, men have turned on one another in hatred, violence, and divisions. God hates it (Prov 6:16-19) and disqualifies a man who is prone to it.

**A Well-Managed Household** (1 Tim 3:4-5, Tit 1:6) – These household requirements do not mean that an unmarried man, or a man without children, cannot be an elder. The qualifications are describing the man who does. The home is a little church and the man is the pastor. How is he doing there?

**‘one who rules his own house well’** – This is where so much of our faith really bears fruit and it is certainly the first place. Is the home in order? Is the family protected, fed, loved, warm and at peace? Is the husband clearly in charge, is the Word of God clearly the foundation of all that is going on, and is there the smell of grace?

**‘children in submission with all reverence** (1 Tim 3:4)...**faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination** (Tit 1:6)’ – Do the children love their father, respect their father, and follow faithfully in their father’s steps as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ? The rhetorical question in 1 Tim 3:5 is obvious.

**Consider Psalm 127:3-5 and Psalm 128:3** – If his children were his war-time brigade, would you sign him up for general? If his children were his olive garden, would you buy his oil?

**Continuing on – ‘not a novice...’** – There is a particular temptation to pride to those who would be placed into the position of elder while still being young in the Lord. This points out the fact that real spiritual warfare is to be expected towards a church, and that the elders must bear the responsibility of that in the Lord. Here we see that elders are to be tested, not unlike deacons (see v10). They must be ‘of full age, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil’ (Heb 5:14).

**‘a good testimony among those who are outside’** – It is alright if they think he is a ‘Jesus-freak’, but they better not call him a Christian with a ‘wink in their eye’.

**Pray for Your Elders** – for they ‘watch out for your souls’. Pray also for God to raise up more qualified men, for this would indicate the fruit of the labor of these elders.

**Look in the Mirror** (James 1:21-25) – Do not be a fool and think that this list of qualifications for an elder, of which you are not one, has nothing to do with you.

**Body Life** (Eph 4:11-16) – Elders are given for the life of the body. Our goal is for *all of us* to grow up in all these things - all by God’s grace.