

Fight the Good Fight
1 Timothy 3:1-9 (Week 09) 11/02/2025
The Portrait of an Elders

This is my message written prior to being preached. Please excuse the bullet point format and any grammatical mistakes. This is meant to be spoken.

¹ The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

Introduction and Review

- **Today** in our study through **1 Timothy** we come to **Chapter 3**.
- Here Paul continues **his instruction regarding order** in the Church.
- At the end of **Chapter 2**, he gave specific **instruction for women**.
- These instructions centered around **the prohibitions** found in **verse 12** where Paul writes...

¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. (1 Timothy 2:12)

- If you were with us last week you know that the word **teach** relates to the careful and **authoritative public transmission of Biblical truth**, what we would call **preaching**.
- And in the church **exercising authority** over men or women is reserved for **church leaders**.
- **So, in the context...**
- Women are prohibited from **preaching and/or leading** the congregation.
- And having established this,
- Paul then **naturally turns** to those who are responsible for teaching (preaching)
- and exercising authority in the church.
- What we at Bridges (and many other churches) **call Elders**.
- **Bridges is an Elder led church**.
- What that means is we are led by a group of men who've been selected and confirmed as elders.
- I, **as the senior pastor**, am one of the elders, but I have no more authority than the other elders.
- Currently these men include **Don Lee, Sean Cadd, Chuck Hiroto and Gary Astfalk**.
- Together we lead, exercise authority, cast vision, we make decisions for this church.
- **Now you might ask**, how do we **select and confirm our elders**.
- **Well**, basically, when **the current elders, for various reasons**,
- decide there is a need for a **new elder or elders...**
- We meet and discuss who, **from the congregation**, we might add to the team.

- We also inform the church body of this and ask for their input (nominations).
- Through this process **men are selected, interviewed** and asked if they would like to serve as an elder.
- And if they agree we schedule a day for **church members** to vote either **Yes or No to confirm**.
- To be confirmed as an elder of Bridges, **at least 2/3 of the members must vote Yes**.
- So that's a summary of the elder selection process.
- **But throughout this process,**
- When the current elders are discussing **who should be selected...**
- When the congregation is **making recommendations** of who should be an elder,
- And prior **to voting yes or no** for **who should be confirmed as an elder...**
- There are two passages in Scripture that we **refer to...**
- **They are** our passage for today **1 Timothy 3:1-7**, and a similar passage in **Titus 1:5-16**.
- Throughout church history, **these two texts** have provided **the portrait of what an elder should look like**, not physically **but spiritually**.
- **They speak mainly of a man's character, priorities and abilities.**
- And **one of the reasons Paul** needed to communicate this portrait to Timothy was because the church in Ephesus **had elders** who did not look right.
- We saw this **in chapter 1** as Paul urges Timothy to...

³ charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine (1 Timothy 1:3)

- It's believed that **since elders** are the ones who are given the responsibility to teach,
- that these certain persons who were teaching **were also elders**.
- So, **Ephesus** had gotten some **bad elders** who **need to be dealt with**.
- But moving forward, the church needed (and needs) guidelines for selecting leaders.
- **So that's what Paul gives...**
- And these guidelines were crucial for Timothy in Ephesus and all Churches since....
- Because a man's authentic spirituality and Christian character is everything in church leadership.
- As goes the leadership, so goes the church.
- It is generally true that if the leadership is Bible-centered, the church will be Bible-centered.
- If the leadership is mission-minded, the church will be mission-minded.
- If the leadership is sincere, the people will be sincere.
- If the leadership is kind, the church will be kind, and so on...
- This is also true negatively!
- Unloving, unfaithful, ungodly leaders produce unloving, unfaithful, ungodly churches.
- And so, Paul gives this church and all churches to come **The Portrait of an Elder**.

- He begins with...

The Aspiration to be an Elder

- In verse 1 of chapter 3 we read.

¹ The saying is trustworthy:

- **Apparently**, there was a saying going around and Paul affirms its truth...

***If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.
(1 Timothy 3:1)***

- Now this word **overseer** (**e-pis-ko-poe in the Greek**).
- Simply means to oversee, to have responsibility for, to lead.
- This is where we get the **word bishop** and where the **Episcopal Church** gets its name.
- Another word for leaders in the church is the Greek word, **pres-by-ter-oi**
- This is where we get the word “**elder**” and where the **Presbyterian Church** gets its name.
- And these two words, **e-pis-ko-poe** and **pres-by-ter-oi** are used interchangeably in the NT.
- In **Act Chapter 20 verse 17** we read...

¹⁷ Now from Miletus [Paul] sent to Ephesus and called the elders (pres-by-ter-oi) of the church to come to him. (Acts 20:17)

- Then in **verse 28 of that same chapter 20**, addressing the elders, we read...

²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (e-pis-ko-poe), to care for the church of God... (Acts 20:28)

- Also, in **Titus 1**, the other passage where Paul speaks about church leadership,
- He uses the word **pres-by-ter-oi** (elder)

⁵ This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— (Titus 1:5)

- My point is the office of overseer **e-pis-ko-poe** is the same as the office of elder **pres-by-ter-oi**.
- And since we call **our leaders elders**, that's the word I will use.

***If anyone aspires to the office of overseer (to be an elder), he desires a noble task.
(1 Timothy 3:1)***

- Paul's hope is that **certain godly men** will aspire (**desire and seek**) to be **elders** in the church.
- This he says is a “**noble task**”.
- That word **noble in the Greek** includes the ideas of **beauty and goodness**.
- Being an elder is a **beautiful, good, noble task**.

- Paul wants Timothy and **all believers** to know that at its heart,
- Being an elder is a wonderful thing to desire and seek after.
- In a way, this is Paul's **advertisement for church leadership**.
- And as the elders (**and other leaders**) of **Bridges church** continue to age,
- It's **my hope** and **prayer** that there **are young men**, who hear this message,
- And who **read Paul's commendation** of being an elder,
- And this will inspire them to **set their minds and hearts** on being the kind of **godly servant leaders** that these verses describe.
- Because **certainly in the secular world**, and all too often in the church,
- The aspiration (desire and seeking) to lead comes from a heart **not to serve but to be served**.
- It comes from godly character but from **a prideful ambitious heart**.
- But that **ought not to be in the church**.
- In fact, **such pride and ambition** indicate that a man **is not elder material**.
- So, **what is elder material**, what should **an elder look like**,
- again, not **physically but spiritual**.
- Well, that's what we find in **verses 2-7**.
- Here Paul paints a picture of **a godly man**, one who is **qualified to be an elder**.
- And so, let's examine...

The Qualification to be an Elder

- But before we get **specific qualifications**, let me mention three things.
- **First**, the **list of qualifications** that we find here in **1 Timothy** is not **exhaustive**,
- In fact, the list found in **Titus** is more **extensive** and even **that could be added to**.
- My point is, those **who are elders** or aspire to be elders shouldn't look at these qualifications as merely a **check lists** saying...
- ***"Okay I meet all these requirements, I've made it!"***
- As elders, even if we meet the qualifications in these letters,
- there is still much room to grow in our faith, **character, and relationship with God**.
- **Second**, while a man either meets or doesn't meet at least one of the qualifications,
- **That is** being **"the husband of one wife"** (either you are, or you are not).
- The others are less definite.
- What I mean by that is if you **are an elder or aspire to be an elder**,
- That doesn't mean you can **never fail in the areas listed**.
- **For example**, **verse 3** tells us that an elder **must not be quarrelsome**.
- That doesn't mean that if an elder has a quarrel with his wife or neighbor or even another elder, that he must immediately resign.
- The qualification is not about **one action or sin**,
- It is about character, who you are and the direction of your life.

- Are you **in general** a quarrelsome person or not,
- and if you do **get into a quarrel**, are you quick to repent,
- asking forgiveness of God and those you quarrel with.
- My point is that an elder need **not be perfect** in these areas,
- However, he must be mature and growing in these and other areas of his life.
- **And third**, for those men who are not elders and who don't currently aspire to be an elder,
- and for women.
- Even though these qualifications are for meant for elders,
- That doesn't mean there is nothing here for you.
- With only a few exceptions, these qualifications apply to all believers.
- If God wants his leaders to have these qualities,
- He certainly wants each one of us to grow in these areas.
- We should all be above reproach, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, etc....
- So, as we look at these **qualifications for elders**.
- We should also be examining our own lives, asking God to help us grow in these areas as well.
- **There is application here for everyone.**
- So now we can look at the specific qualifications of an Elder.
- First, we come to...

1. The Elders Reputation

- Paul begins with a **general charge**...

2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach... (1 Timothy 3:2)

- **Above reproach** is one word in the Greek and it means **to be blameless**, and it refers to someone **observable conduct**.
- When people look at your life, there is no blame to be found.
- You cannot be **rightly blamed for any wrong doing**.
- **I say rightly** because, of course,
- Christians throughout history have been subject to **false accusation, false blame**.
- This was certainly true even of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- He was **falsely accused** of a number of things, **including blasphemy**.
- At his trial before **Caiaphas**, when Jesus made a **true statement, implying** that he was the "**Son of Man**" and would be seated at the right hand of God... we read...

⁶⁵ **Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy." (Matthew 26:65)**

- My point is **as elders and Christians**; we can do and say all the right true Biblical things.
- And still be accused of **wrong doing**.

- This week Christina reminded me of **the Christian Cake-Maker from Colorado** who refused, based on his religious, Christian beliefs, **to make a wedding cake for a gay couple**.
- Even though he was doing the right thing, not supporting something that the Bible calls sin.
- He received **hate and accusations** from the gay community and their supporters.
- As far as they were concerned, he was **not above reproach**.
- But in the eyes of **God and the Bible believing Christian community** he was.
- I am reminded of **Paul's words to the Romans...**

¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. (Romans 12:18)

- So far as it depends on you, be above reproach, blameless in the eyes of all.
- And this **qualification of being above reproach** seems to summarize all that follows...
- for the **final qualification** is also **about reputation...**

⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:7)

- We'll talk more about this in our final point.
- But I want us to see that Paul is **concerned about an elder's reputation**.
- How he is **viewed both inside and outside of the Church**.
- And how he is viewed relates to all the qualifications that follow.
- **Being above reproach means...**
- If someone were to ask the family, friends, neighbors, fellow church members
- and other acquaintances **of an elder (or anyone)**.
- Does this man live up to these qualifications.
- Everyone could honestly say, **YES, HE DOES!**
- So, let's turn to the qualifications that speak to an elder's reputation...
- And that takes us to...

2. The Elders Marriage

² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach,

- And the first way to be above reproach is to be...

the husband of one wife... (1 Timothy 3:2)

- Literally this could read **a one-woman/wife man**.
- **Winston Churchill** once attended a **formal banquet in London**,
- **There** the **dignitaries** were asked this question,
- *If you could not be who you are, who would you like to be?*

- Naturally everyone was curious about what Churchill, **who was seated next to his beloved Clemmie**, would say.
- He was the last person to respond, **he rose and gave his answer**.
- If I could not be who I am, I would most like to be...
- **and here he paused to take his wife's hand –**
- Lady Churchill's second husband.
- **Meaning** if he couldn't be himself, her first husband, **he would be her second**.
- Churchill was **a very clever man**.
- He was also **devoted to his wife - a one-woman man**.
- **This is a high standard for elders.**
- But not in the way **it's so often misinterpreted**.
- The common **misinterpretation** is **quantitative** (numerical),
- Of course you can only be married to one woman.
- But the misinterpretation is that an elder **can and even must have had only one wife ever**.
- Thus, if you are single, divorced (through no fault of his own)
- or even widowed and remarried, he could not be an elder.
- **But that is not the meaning,**
- Because a man can be **married to only one woman his whole life** and not be a one-woman man.
- The correct sense here is not **quantitative** but **qualitative**.
- A man is truly a one-woman man when there are **no other women in his life**.
- He is **totally faithful**. He does not flirt with other women.
- There must be no **physical or emotional romantic connections with any other woman**.
- He must keep his wedding vows.
- And you can see how failure in this area would destroy his reputation,
- and damage the reputation of the church he leads.
- So, with regards to this marriage, an elder must be the husband of one wife, **a one-woman man**.
- And then Paul speaks of...

3. The Elder's Self-Discipline

- This is seen in the **next three qualifications**, an elder must be...

sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable

- King David, who sinned terribly with respect to **faithfulness in his marriage**...
- He was **not a one-woman man**...
- However, he does provide a great example of **self-discipline** amidst the misery and rebellion that followed **his sin and repentance**.

- His remarkable **self-discipline**, recorded in **2 Samuel 16**, took place during David's son **Absalom's** rebellion.
- He and his men fled Jerusalem...

¹³ *...while Shimei (one of Saul's descendants who blamed David for Saul's death) went along on the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went and threw stones at him and flung dust. ¹⁴ And the king, and all the people who were with him, arrived weary at the Jordan. And there he refreshed himself. (2 Samuel 16:13-14)*

- Get the picture, Shimei is making a great nuisance of himself.
- And David with just a word to one of his men could have taken Shimei out.
- But with great **self-discipline**, and understanding where Shimei's hate was coming from,
- David **left vengeance to God**.

- David was **sober-minded, self-controlled and respectable**.
- Sober-minded" means "**clear-headed**,"
- Dave understood the situation **and knew when and how to act (or not act)**.

- He was also **Self-controlled** he did not **succumb to anger and lash out**.
- And finally, he was "**Respectable**" this refers to how **people saw David**.
- His reputation grew, because he showed **great self-discipline**.
- In this situation David was at his best!
- Exemplifying the words that his **son Solomon** would later write...

³² *Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. (Proverbs 16:32)*

- And this "sober-minded, self-controlled" respectability is a must **for every leader**.
- To **Titus**, Paul says, leader must be...

⁸ *...[be] self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. (Titus 1:8)*

- And how do we (how do elders accomplish) this **self-discipline**.
- Well, like the rest of the qualifications, **and everything that God desires us to do and me...**
- It is only possible through **God's work in our lives...**
- As Paul wrote to the **Galatians...**

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; (Galatians 5:22-23)*

- Ironically or not, our self-discipline our sober-minded, self-control which results in respectability comes from **the Spirit of God**.
- Therefore, the implication of these qualifications is that an elder **must be filled with the Spirit**.
- So, in his life, an elder must be **self-disciplined**.

- Paul turns to...

4. The Elder's Ministry

- The apostle gives a twofold summary of an elder's ministry, he must be...

Hospitable (*this speaks to meeting people's physical needs*),
able to teach (*this speaks to meeting people's spiritual needs*)

- Missionary E. Stanley Jones provides quite an example of hospitality.
- As a young man he was preaching his first evangelistic service among the poor mountaineers of Kentucky.
- The meetings were held in the schoolhouse.
- Says **Jones**:

At the schoolhouse I was invited to stay with a man and his wife, and when I arrived I saw there was one bed. The husband said, "You take the far side." Then he got in, and then his wife. In the morning we reversed the process. I turned my face to the wall as they dressed, and they stepped out while I dressed. That was real hospitality! I have slept in palaces, but the hospitality of that one-bed-home is the most memorable and the most appreciated. (E. Stanley Jones)

- **Hospitality** in the Greek literally means "**love of strangers**"
- And according to God's word, it is to be a virtue of all God's people.
- Paul told the **Roman Christians** to...

¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. (Romans 12:13)

- "Seek" means "pursue" or "chase" and sometimes means "**strenuous pursuit**."
- Christians, and especially leaders, are not simply to wait for opportunities for hospitality but are to pursue them.
- **And Peter** tells us we are to...

⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. (1 Peter 4:9)

- An elder must be a joyous gracious host.
- He must invite people into his home.
- Both **fellow church members and strangers or non-believers**.
- I think this is a definite area that I (and I suspect) our other elders can improve in.
- If we are going to minister to the people of Bridges,
- and if we are going to be witnesses in our community.
- We need to be **known for our hospitality to all!**
- So, on the one hand is hospitality and on the other is the **ability to teach**.
- An elder must be...

able to teach

- Paul gives it fuller expression in Titus:

⁹ He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (Titus 1:9)

- An Elder must be able to instruct people in their understanding and applying of Scripture.
- This doesn't mean that **every elder** must be gifted in **preaching the word**.
- Or even that they have some kind of **formal teaching position** in the church.
- But it does mean that an elder **must be a student of the Word**,
- a man who knows **the Bible** and **can and does communicate it** and, when necessary, defend the faith.
- So, we have seen an elder's **ministry is both to the physical and spiritual spiritual needs of others**.
- Next comes...

5. The Elder's Restraint

- An elder must...

³ not a drunkard, (1 Timothy 3:3) be...

- Literally, he must not ***linger beside wine***.
- **Drunkenness** is certainly a problem today, but it was also a problem in Paul's day.
- **Even in the church**.
- To **the Corinthians**, in the context of **the Lord's Supper**, Paul wrote...

²¹ For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. (1 Corinthians 11:21)

- It seems that some Christians were in the habit of getting drunk at the Lord's Supper.
- Which was a **full meal**.
- Paul repeats **this warning to deacons in verse 8...**

⁸ Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine... (1 Timothy 3:8)

- And again, to **elders** in **Titus 1:7**, an elder...

⁷ ...must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard... (Titus 1:7)

- And Paul applies this to all believers when to **the Ephesian church** he writes...

⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit... (Ephesians 5:18)

- **Now throughout church history** and today,
- Christians have **taken different stands** about the use of alcohol...
- But **what is clear from Scripture** is that drunkenness is not to be tolerated in the life of any believer, **but especially for Church leaders.**
- Alcohol (especially in excess) is a destroyer of lives, and it **leads to debauchery...**
- It can aid in removing a person's restraint and self-discipline,
- leading them to sin and damaging **their reputation in the church and community.**
- Thus, Paul says elders should show restraint **by not being a drunkard.**
- Then he addresses...

6. The Elders Temperament

- **Temperament** refers to a person's general nature,
- especially with regards to their outward behavior.
- And Paul says that an elder's temperament should be...

not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome

- **Churchgoers in a small Swedish town,**
- had to drag **their furious choir director** away from one of the **women in the congregation.**
- **Because he was whacking her back and legs with his cane.**
- When ask why he had **done such a thing**, he explained...
- *"I just went wild because she kept singing off-key..."*
- *She's tone deaf and I begged her **for years not to sing so loud!**"*
- Whatever could be said about this choir director, **he definitely was not elder material!**
- The **Greek translated "not violent"** is literally **"not a giver of blows"**
- and is **metaphorical for a person** who has a quarrelsome attitude that leads to violence.
- And this is something we do not want to see in our elders.
- Instead, elders should be **gentle.**
- **Again, a fruit of the Spirit**, an elder must rely on the Lord to be a gentle man.
- **Gentle in the Greek includes the ideas of patience and fairness.**
- **Being reasonable...**
- As **James** tells all believers...

¹⁹ Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; (James 1:19)

- This is a **description of gentleness...**
- When interacting with **people or dealing with a problem,**
- a good elder will not jump to conclusions,
- He will not talk over or intimidate people.

- Instead, **he will patiently lovingly hear them out**, even giving them the benefit of the doubt.
- And even when correction is in order, he will respond **gently**,
- Speaking the truth in love.
- So, we've seen that an elders temperament should be characterized not by violence but gentleness.
- And then Paul addresses...

7. The Elders Money

- Specifically, Paul speaks of **one's attitude toward money**...
- An elder must...

not be a lover of money

- Connecting this qualification together with **not being a drunkard**,
- Theologian Os Guinness makes a great point about **priorities in the church**.

If a man is drunk on wine, you'll throw him out. But if he is drunk on money, you'll make him a deacon. (Os Guinness)

- **We Americans** can be impressed by people **who fulfill the American Dream**...
- Which we often define as **"making it financially."**
- **And we even give it spiritual weight.**
- If a man **has lots of money**, that means God has blessed him
- (Never mind what the Bible says about the situation);
- it means he's smart (well, maybe).
- it means he's a good manager, a practical man; that he has power;
- it means he can lead.
- **Oh really?**
- This is certainly what **much of our culture would say**...
- But Paul says something very different,
- **in Chapter 6 of 1 Timothy**, he writes...

⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. (1 Timothy 6:9-10)

- What does a lover of money desire.
- Certainly not to love and minister to people, **but to acquire much wealth**.
- And this leads to nowhere good.
- Ultimately **the lover of money** will be ensnared in all kinds of evil,
- Causing some to reject their faith entirely.

- Now I know that the Bible doesn't say that money, **in and of itself is evil**.
- It clearly speaks of **"the love of money"** as being the problem.
- So, having money, even being rich, is not the problem.
- The problem is whether you are rich, poor or somewhere in between,
- The problem is the heart,
- Having a passion for money and allowing it to drive your purpose.
- **Instead of having a passion for God and letting him drive your purpose.**
- And this **love of money can be a great temptation in our culture.**
- We live in **a culture** that puts a **high value** on material possessions, financial security, keeping up with the Jones.
- It is hard, whether you have it or not, **to not fall in love with money.**
- It can and has become the god of many.
- But, as Jesus said, in the sermon on the mount,

24 "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. (Matthew 6:24)

- Maybe we should put a warning on our money like we do our cigarettes.
- *"Warning the Word of God has determined that Falling in Love with Money" will lead to your destruction.*
- So, Paul, **wisely disqualifies for church leadership**, any man who loves money.
- And then he turns to...

8. An Elder's Household

- Here Paul becomes much more descriptive.
- Regarding the elder's home, in **verses 4 and 5** he writes,

4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? (1 Timothy 3:4-5)

- The word translated **"household"** here is **oikos** (literally, "house")
- and is the same word used in **verse 15** as a **metaphor for the church**.
- **Paul writes...**

5 if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God.... (1 Timothy 3:15)

- So, Paul is saying, the man who fails to manage his family (**household**) **oikos**...
- Is disqualified from managing (leading) the **other oikos, the church!**
- **This is really just commonsense!**

- And with regards to **managing his household well**,
- The one example given is...

with all dignity (or honesty) keeping his children submissive

- It seems that children here would refer to children still living in your household.
- Not adult children **who are out of the house** and no longer under the elder's authority.
- So, what does it mean to keep these children who live in your home submissive.
- Well, being submissive means **obeying the authority that is over you**.
- And so, managing your household includes raising children who do not rebel against your authority but obey **their Father and Mother**.
- Paul is saying if your own children, living in your household, do not submit to your authority.
- How can you expect a congregation, the household of God, to submit to your authority.
- **Paul then turns to...**

9. The Elder's Maturity

- Verse 6...

⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:6)

- "Puffed up with conceit" literally means "filled with smoke,"
- full of hot air, we might say.
- An elder must not be a recent convert because there is a great danger that he will become **prideful...**
- That his focus will turn away from ministry to the congregation, **and instead to his own greatness**.
- As my football coach would often say to **16-year-old me...**
- **Woolfs, you're a legend in your own mind.**
- Being a **legend in your own mind** would be a great temptation for a recently converted man who was **then appointed as an elder**.
- I've only been a Christian for a short time, and I've already made it to the pinnacle of church leadership.
- **Wow, I must be something!**
- And this pride, this puffed-up conceit leads nowhere good.
- As **Solomon** tells us...

¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. (Proverbs 16:18)

- Ultimately, this recent convert, filled with pride will fail will fail.

- And then in his immaturity, he will

fall into the condemnation of the devil

- You aren't quite the hot shot you thought you were.
- In fact, you're not much of a Christian at all.
- You should be ashamed of yourself; you shouldn't even show your face in church...
- **And on and on the condemnation of the devil goes.**
- So, for their own **spiritual protection**, and **to protect the church**,
- Paul prohibits **recent converts from being elders**.
- And that brings us full circle to...

10. The Elder's Reputation Again

- This is where we began...

⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:7)

- "**well thought of**" is literally a "**beautiful witness**" –
- An elder must have a beautiful witness with outsiders.
- And as we saw when **we first looked at reputation**,
- Sometimes, no matter how "godly" we are there are outsiders who will condemn and hate us.
- But in general, an elder will be a beautiful witness (even to those who condemn him)...
- If his **reputation** is "above reproach"
- if his **self-discipline** is seen by his being "**sober-minded, self-controlled and respectable**,"
- if in his **ministry** he is "**hospitable and able to teach**,"
- if his **restraint** is demonstrated by his "**not [being] a drunkard**,"
- if his **temperament** is "**not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome**,"
- if he is "**not a lover of money**,"
- if his **household** is in order, **his children are obedient**.
- And if his **maturity is established**.
- Such a man will not only be a gift to the church he leads.
- His life will shine forth as a beautiful witness to the world.
- As his words and his deeds proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- But if he fails in these areas, **he will bring disgrace upon himself and the church**.
- This is the **devil's trap**, his snare, his plan, **to cause church leaders to fall into disgrace**.
- **Thus, damaging the cause of Christ**.
- We've seen it happen too many times,
- As church leaders fall into disgrace over financial, sexual and other scandals and the world looks on and scoffs at God and his church.

- So when it comes to the elders, the leaders of **our church** and any church...
- Much is at stake.
- As **Pastor Kent Hughes says...**

What our leadership is in microcosm, the church will become in macrocosm, and what the church is has everything to do with gospel and mission. (Kent Hughes)

- Therefore, we must take Paul's portrait of an elders to heart for the sake of the gospel.
- We need to raise the bar and hold it there.
- We need to see leadership as a calling.
- Church leadership is not a **political position** to be sought for oneself.
- It is **a joy and a burden** that some must accept.
- Leaders are **not determined by popularity**.
- They must be **the kind of men pictured** here by **Paul to Timothy**.
- **And the church must recognize who they are.**
- We must see leadership as a calling.
- We must **determine to prepare and equip such leaders.**
- So let me make three final applications.
- **First, to the current elders at Bridges (me included)...**
- We need to examine our lives in light of this passage,
- and we need to call upon the Lord to help us grow in our areas of weakness,
- that we might be the leaders God has for this Church.
- That we might be a beautiful witness to the world.
- That we might not fall into the devil's snare.
- **Second, for all men (especially young men), whether you currently aspire to be an elder or not...**
- You must call upon the Lord to aid in your **growth and maturity** in the areas that Paul sets forth.
- You must be ready for the day that God might give you the **desire to lead in His church.**
- **And finally, to the whole congregation, (all of us, men and women).**
- We should all ask the Lord to help us grow **in the qualifications that apply to us.**
- And not only should we understand **these qualifications** as we choose future elders,
- but in **light of what we have learned, we must pray...**
- Pray that our current elders will continue grow and be the kind of men described here.
- That God will protect them from disgrace and the snares of the devil.
- And pray that that God will raise up these kinds of men to be future leaders at Bridges,
- So that we might not only continue to grow in faith,
- but also, that we might all be "beautiful witnesses" to the world.
- **So would you join me in prayer as Sean comes to lead us to the Lord's Table.**