



PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

October 14, 2018

Qualifications of Elders (2)

by Frank Himmel

More of the qualifications of elders concern their character than any other aspect of their lives. In this study we will consider the positive characteristics required of those who would lead God's people.

1. *Above reproach* (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6). Some translations say "blameless." This is the first quality mentioned in both lists. That had led some to think it is the only qualification, and that all other things listed are "points of blamelessness" or specifics in which elders are to be above reproach. Such is not the case (for example, it is not a reproach to be a novice). What, then, is meant?

Obviously, no man is above reproach or blameless in the absolute sense, meaning complete perfection or sinlessness. When applied to man it means "that cannot be laid hold of, hence, not open to censure, irreproachable" (Vine). It does not mean no charge is ever made, but that none can be sustained.

2. *Temperate* (1 Timothy 3:2). The KJV renders it "vigilant." The root word is used in connection with watchfulness (2 Timothy 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8). Thayer says it means "sober, temperate, abstaining

from wine." The idea is sober with respect to wine, then sober-minded generally, watchful, alert. Elders are to watch for themselves and the flock (Acts 20:28). They must be aware of what is going on.

3. *Prudent* (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). This word is similar in meaning to the preceding one. It means an overseer must be a man of sound mind, a man of good judgment. He must be calm, cautious, and wise in the decisions he makes. His work requires careful thought and sound reasoning. The Cotton Patch Version says "level-headed, with a lot of horse sense." It is not very scholarly, but it gets the point across!

**A careful study of God's word
reveals that God expects these
qualities of every Christian.**

4. *Respectable* (1 Timothy 3:2). Paul used the same term here in describing the elder's character

that he used in 2:9 to describe the woman's attire. There it is rendered "proper" or "modest" (KJV). The word means well-ordered or well-arranged. The overseer's life, then, must be well ordered. He must be mannerly in demeanor, appropriate in appearance, graceful in speech, and wholesome in habits.

5. *Hospitable* (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). Some brethren could do better at showing hospitality and friendliness. Who better to take the lead than the elders? But more is implied here. The term is from a compound word that means "love of strangers" (Vine). That puts a special emphasis on newcomers and visitors. It is a good practice for elders to arrive at services early to greet the worshipers—familiar faces as well as ▶

strangers. And what better way is there to welcome people than to have them visit in your home? Bear in mind that all Christians are to demonstrate this quality (1 Peter 4:9; Hebrews 13:2).

6. *Gentle (1 Timothy 3:3)*. Thayer says this word means “equitable, fair, mild, gentle.” A bullish, coarse, crude approach is not popular with most people. Yet some think the only way to handle a problem is head on—as hard as you can hit it. Such has resulted in more than a few sheep leaving the fold. A mild, tactful approach may be slower, but often it yields better results. The KJV rendering “patient” is therefore appropriate.

7. *Loving what is good (Titus 1:8)*. Good things, good deeds, good people, good efforts, and anything else worthy of praise—these are all affectionately cherished by an overseer. He delights in them, and he will do all he can to encourage them. He gives a “pat on the back,” a kind word of constructive criticism, an opportunity for training, and his own good example.

8. *Just (Titus 1:8)*. God does not show partiality, and neither should we (Romans 2:11; James 2:1-13). Shepherds must be those who will treat all the sheep fairly. Disputes must be settled without prejudice. Decisions must take into account the flock as a whole, not just the preference of a few. Discipline must be exercised without respect of persons. In the Old Testament era, God singled out the Levites for special service because they did not show partiality to their own family members when punishing idolatry (Exodus 32:26-29; Deuteronomy 33:8-11).

9. *Devout (Titus 1:8)*. *Devout* or *holy* suggests a spiritual man, one who has given himself wholly to the Lord. He thinks often and talks often of spiritual things. He spends a great amount of time praying and reading God’s word. He does “not let sin reign in his mortal body” (Romans 6:12).

He can say with Paul, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

10. *Self-controlled (Titus 1:8)*. The last of these qualifications is similar to the second and third. To be fit to lead

God’s people a man must have learned to control himself: his temper as well as his tongue. The NIV rendering “disciplined” might also suggest self-discipline in the use of his time, energy, money, and other resources. These will be needed in his role of overseer.

A careful study of God’s word reveals that God expects these qualities of *every* Christian. They take time to develop to a mature level. No one should be considered for the function of overseer until he has achieved them—all of them.

In our next article we will take a look at those qualifications relating to reputation, experience, and ability. ■



Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Adam Gibson	Howard Moore
SONG LEADER	Clifton Lefort	Greg Winget
OPENING PRAYER	Mike Zachry	
LORD’S SUPPER		
BREAD	Mark Clifton	
CUP	Kerry Gray	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Daven Daniel	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Mark Clifton
CLOSING PRAYER	Albert Lee Harrison	Stachys McLeod