

**Bishops (Elders) & Deacons in the Church  
(1 Timothy 3:1–16)**

**Grace Chapel November 29, 2009 Dr. John Niemelä**

**INTRODUCTION**

**QUALIFICATIONS FOR BISHOPS (ELDERS) & DEACONS (3:1–13)**

**QUALIFICATIONS FOR BISHOPS (ELDERS) (3:1–7)**

**Introduction: The Issue of Balance**

The only man who perfectly meets the *character issues* would be Jesus Christ.

Even so, Paul & Barnabas appointed elders for every church as they were in Asia Minor (Acts 14:23). Likewise, Titus was to appoint elders in every city in Crete (Titus 1:5) Clearly, qualifications are not to be treated as so rigorous that only Jesus Christ would meet them.

Yet, Jesus Christ was never married and never raised children. Ditto for Paul.

Thus, under the most rigorous interpretations of the marriage and family issues, neither Jesus Christ nor Paul would qualify as elders.

Our approach to the balance issue is: No glaring weaknesses.

**(3:1) Aspiring to be an overseer [or elder] is to aspire to a good work**

<sup>1</sup>This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop [or overseer. Overseer = elder], he desires a good work.

BISHOP is a transliteration

Greek:

ePISKOPos

English:

BISHOP

Episkopos = overseer (*epi* = over; *skopos* = seer)

Acts 20:17 & 28 equate elders and bishops

(C. 1 Peter 5:1–2)

**(3:2) A bishop (elder) must be a one-woman man, balanced, prudent, respectable, friendly to strangers, & teachable**

<sup>2</sup> A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, ~~able to teach~~ [teachable];

*Blameless = anepilēpton = not overstepping moral limits*

*Husband of one wife = mias gunaikos andra = no improper sexual relationships.*

*Literally, one-woman man*

*Temperate = nēphaios = moderation (balanced)*

*Sober-minded = sōphrōn = prudent (rational or reasonable)*

*Of good behavior = kosmios = respectable (not given to shocking behavior)*

*Hospitable = philoxenos = friendly to strangers (welcoming to others)*

*Teachable = didaktikos = (open to correction from the Bible & from other bels)*

**(3:3) The elder is not to be a problem drinker, not money-hungry, kind, does not incite arguments, not driven to acquire**

<sup>3</sup> not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous;

**(3:4–5) The elder is to lead his own household well, including his (at home) children, because one who fails to lead his home will also fail in leading God’s assembled believers**

<sup>4</sup> one who rules his own house well, having *his* children in submission with all reverence.

<sup>5</sup> (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);

**(3:6) The elder is not to be a novice in order to prevent pride from causing him to suffer judgment (removing him from office): pride being the cause of Satan suffering judgment that removed him from his office**

<sup>6</sup> not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the *same* condemnation as the devil.

Better translation of the last phrase: *fall into the devil's judgment*.

An unfortunate feature of the NKJ translation of this verse is that people tend to think of a future condemnation of Satan. Rather, *eis krima empesē tou diabolou*, would literally be *fall into the devil's judgment*. Instead, it looks at a past judgment of the devil, his removal from office as the highest of angels. Similarly, the elder whose pride causes a spectacular failure will face a judgment that involves removal from office.

Paul does not say that experienced men are immune from destructive pride. They are not. What he says is that novices are prone to destructive pride.

This verse not only warns about appointing a novice, but also warns of pride.

**(3:7) The elder must have a good reputation among even unbelievers in order to rise above reproach and satanic snares**

<sup>7</sup> Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

The snares include failing on the foregoing traits, causing reproach (disqualification)

### **QUALIFICATIONS FOR DEACONS (3:8–13)**

Acts 6:ff. gives an idea of how the idea of deacons started (serve tables 6:2 uses diakoneo)

**(3:8) Deacons must [meet a similar set of qualifications as elders do] being respectable, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money**

*Reverent = semnos* = worthy of respect                      Cf. 2:2; 3:4, 11

*Not double tongued*

*Not given to much wine*    Cf. 33

*Not greedy for money*    Cf. 33

**(3:9) Deacons must (with clean conscience) adhere to the (revealed) mystery (given) for (the saints to) believe**

What did mystery (*mysterion*) mean in Paul's day?

What does *mystery of the faith* mean?

With a pure conscience (cf. 1:5)

**(3:10) Deacons are to be men who have already been proven, then (assuming they are found to be above reproach) let them serve (diakoneo)**

Cf. 3:6

**(3:11) [Deacons'] wives are (just as with deacons) to be respectable, not slanderous, temperate, faithful in all things**

**(3:12) Deacons are to be one-women men who lead their children and households well**

**(3:13) Deacons who serve well obtain rewardability and boldness in regard to faith in Christ Jesus**

**PROPER CONDUCT IN LIGHT OF THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS (3:14–16)**

**(3:14–15) Paul wrote this letter, despite expecting to come soon, so Timothy would know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, the Church of the Living God, which supports the truth**

1 Timothy was written in the fall of A.D. 62. Hoehner proposes that Paul may have returned to Ephesus the following spring.

The NKJ adds the word *you* once too often in verse 15. Literally, the text reads, *that you may know how it is necessary (in the house of God) to conduct self*. Now, the question is whether Paul is saying:

1. I want you to know how it is necessary to conduct yourself.
2. I want you to know how it is necessary to conduct oneself.

I would venture to say that Timothy knows how to conduct himself, but he is there to teach the Ephesians how to conduct themselves.

**(3:16) Undeniably, the mystery of godliness is great: specifically, God was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated by the [Holy] Spirit, was seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory**

**CONCLUSION**