

Message #13

I Timothy 3:2c-f

“Temperate, Prudent, Respectable and Hospitable”

When it comes to church leadership, having a track record that qualifies one to lead is not an option; it is a “must” (I Tim. 3:2).

IF THE CHURCH OF GOD IS TO BECOME A PILLAR AND SUPPORT OF THE TRUTH OF GOD, IT MUST HAVE MEN AS ELDERS AND DEACONS WHO ARE CONTINUALLY MEETING THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH.

These are qualifications which are to be met—they are attainable.

QUALIFICATION #1 – The elder must be above reproach. **3:2a**

After examining carefully Biblical information pertaining to this qualification, we concluded that this means a leader must be one who has earned for himself a good name and reputation in the church as being a faithful man of God. Nothing is to continually exist in his life that could bring a valid charge of unfaithfulness against him.

QUALIFICATION #2 – The elder must be the husband of one wife. **3:2b**

What we concluded this means is that a man desiring to be an elder cannot be a man who is promiscuous or flirtatious. He must be devoted to one woman.

QUALIFICATION #3 – The elder must be temperate. **3:2c**

The Greek word “temperate” is only used three times in the New Testament:

1) I Tim. 3:2 - it refers to elders; 2) I Tim. 3:11 - it refers to women; and 3) Titus 2:2 - it refers to older men.

In ancient times, this particular word was used concerning wine and specifically had to do with being sober. In Biblical times, wine was the normal drink served with meals since fresh, safe water was such a rare commodity. The term “temperate” was originally used in connection with wine to describe a person who would not get drunk. The man who would lead could drink a glass of wine, but he was to be controlled enough to remain sober. However, the word comes from a Greek verb that is much broader than just the context of drinking wine. It refers to staying controlled and calm and circumspect in any given situation (G. Abbott-Smith, pp. 302-303). As the New Testament age developed, the term “temperate” spoke of the character of a man, not just in the context of wine but in the context of life.

This qualification, then, is one that refers to a man who, in any given situation, can remain clear-headed and controlled. William Hendriksen said this qualification describes a man who is not controlled by sudden impulses, but is stable. Such a man cannot be lured into non-sensible areas.

Richard Lenski said this qualification describes a man who is not flighty and unstable, but one who is sound in judgment (Lenski, p. 582). Philip Towner says this refers to a man who is not a fuzzy thinker, but to one who has sobriety in judgment (p. 85).

There is no question that the implication is that a leader will face many situations and notions that will intoxicate the majority. The man who leads in God's church must be stable, not fickle. He must not be controlled by the emotional or the sensational or the whimsical, even if it is intoxicating everyone else. He must remain temperate.

QUALIFICATION #4 – The elder must be prudent. **3:2d**

The word “prudent” is one that speaks of a mind that is sober, sound, and self-controlled (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 438). In fact, this word is translated must be “sensible” in Titus 1:8. It speaks of one who has control of his mental faculties. When we combine the terms “temperate” and “prudent,” we are left with the image of a highly disciplined man. When a church is looking for leaders, it must look for men who are highly disciplined in their personal, mental and spiritual lives. These words imply, as Dr. Lock writes, “a well ordered demeanor.”

One college president said to a class of graduating seniors, “It gets easier and easier for a man to dominate his universe...and harder for him to dominate himself.”

Thomas A Kempis said the most severe conflict that any person can ever enter into is the conflict to subdue himself.

QUALIFICATION #5 – The elder must be respectable. **3:2e**

This particular word means that the elder must be a man who is orderly, decent and modest (Smith, p. 255). There must be a sense of dignity to the man who would lead God's church.

If a man is to lead others, he must be orderly himself. He must have decency to him and modesty. Barclay says this is the outward expression of one who is temperate and prudent. The leader in God's church should be a good, respectable citizen in society.

Leadership, as Homer Kent said, “...is no place for the man whose life is a continual confusion of unaccomplished plans and unorganized activity” (p. 127).

A critical contextual key to an orderly respectability is a self-controlled mind and a self-disciplined life.

The actual word “respect” carries with it the idea of not just inward and outward character, but also outward look. The man who would lead God's church as an elder or deacon must be one who also has a respectable look about him. This would include clothing, hair, and other cosmetic areas.

QUALIFICATION #6 – The elder must be hospitable. **3:2f**

The word “hospitable” is one that refers to one who had a tender affection toward and is hospitable to strangers (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 470). Strangers should feel welcome in the home of an elder. Much of this depends on the wife. This was especially important during the days of Paul, because many believers had been forced out of their homes by persecution and it was not easy for some of them to immediately get or find jobs. It was critical for survival that the leaders be men who would be hospitable to visitors and strangers. Also, during the days of Paul, there were not nice hotels and motels that were affordable to many believers, who, for the most part, were poor. It was a real ministry to open one’s heart and home to a family and give them a meal. Hospitality was an important part of survival for many of these first century believers. The inns were filled with brawls and vice, and certainly no place for the believer, so taking these poor believers into one’s home was an extremely important ministry.

Hospitality is something that every Christian home is to demonstrate (Rom. 12:13). In fact, the writer of Hebrews says that one reason why every Christian home should demonstrate hospitality to strangers is because it is possible to actually house an angel (Heb. 13:2).

The words of Albert Barnes, who wrote in the mid 1800’s, are worth considering on this point:

“The customs of society are indeed changed; and one evidence of advancement in commerce and in security is furnished in the fact that inns are now provided and patronized for the traveler in all Christian lands. Still this does not lessen the obligations to show hospitality. It is demanded by the very genius of Christianity. ...To what extent this is to be done, is one of those questions which are to be left to every man’s conscience and views of duty. No rule can be given on the subject. Many men have not the means to be extensively hospitable; and many are not placed in situations that require it. No rules could be given that should be applicable to all cases; and hence the Bible has left the general direction, has furnished examples where it was exercised, has recommended it to mankind, and then has left every man to act on the rule, as he will answer it to God” (*Barnes’ Notes On The New Testament*, p. 646).

If a church is to become the pillar and support of the truth of God, it needs qualified leadership. It needs men who are disciplined, self-controlled, respectable, and hospitable. If a man is going to lead others, he must be able to lead himself. He must continually demonstrate that he himself is developing for God.

This text is about leadership, but it has application for all believers—men, women, and children. Are we disciplined in our life? How about when it comes to personal devotions? Are we under control or out of control? Do we have a testimony of a respectable and hospitable believer? If so, we are on our way to becoming a pillar and support of the truth of God!