

Essential Commitments of a Local Church

Pt. 8b

We are Committed to a plurality of Godly Leadership than the Business or Democratic Model

I Thess 5:12-13

¹² And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

Introduction:

The most important qualities leaders can demonstrate are not intelligence, a forceful personality, glibness, diligence, vision, administrative skills, decisiveness, courage, humor, tact, or any other similar natural attribute. Those all play a part, but the most desirable quality for any leader is integrity.

While integrity is most desirable in secular leadership, its absence is fatal to spiritual leadership.

All leadership seeks to accomplish is one goal: influence. Leaders seek to influence people to achieve

their objectives. Influence is a direct result of teaching and example. What a man is will influence his followers to be fully committed to what he says.

Teaching sets the nails into the mind, but example is the hammer that drives them in deep. Not surprisingly, the Scripture has much to say about the power of example to influence behavior, both for good and for evil.

In Leviticus 18:3 God warned Israel not to follow the example of their pagan neighbors:

“You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes.”

Deuteronomy 18:9 repeats that warning: “When you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations.”

Proverbs 22:24–25 warns, “Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, lest you learn his ways, and find a snare for yourself.” The power of an evil ruler to influence his subordinates is seen in Proverbs 29:12:

“If a ruler pays attention to falsehood, all his ministers become wicked.”

Hosea echoed that warning: “And it will be, like people, like priest; so I will punish them for their ways, and repay them for their deeds” (Hos. 4:9).

Our Lord gave this indictment of the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:1–3:

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying, “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them.”

The Bible also encourages us to follow godly examples.

Paul commended the Thessalonians for becoming “imitators of us and of the Lord” (1 Thess. 1:6).

To the Philippians he wrote, “The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things” (Phil. 4:9).

He encouraged both Timothy (1 Tim. 4:12) and Titus (Titus 2:7) to be good examples for their people to follow.

Hebrews 13:7 exhorts us to follow the example of godly leaders, while James 5:10 points us to the example of the prophets.

Peter admonishes elders to be examples to their flocks (1 Peter 5:3).

The power of example can be seen in the influence of two of Israel’s kings. Repeatedly, godly kings of the

southern kingdom are said to have followed the example of David (cf. 1 Kings 3:3; 15:11; 2 Kings 18:1–3; 22:1–2; 2 Chron. 29:1–2; 34:1–2), while wicked kings of the northern kingdom are said to walk in the sins of Jeroboam (cf. 1 Kings 16:1–2, 18–19, 25–26, 30–31; 2 Kings 3:1–3; 10:29, 31; 13:1–2, 6, 10–11; 14:23–24; 15:8–9, 17–18, 23–24, 27–28; 17:22).

It is not enough for a leader in the church to teach the truth, he must also model it. Richard Baxter writes,

It is not likely that the people will much regard the doctrine of such men, when they see that they do not live as they preach. They will think that he doth not mean as he speaks, if he do not live as he speaks. They will hardly believe a man that seemeth not to believe himself. (*The Reformed Pastor* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1979], 84)

Integrity is living what you teach and preach. That is why all the qualifications for leaders given in this passage describe their moral character. It is not the typical list a corporate analyst might come up with, because the issue is not leadership skills, but spiritual example. One who would lead people to Christlikeness must be a pattern of godly behavior for his people to follow. He must be above reproach in his moral life, home life, spiritual maturity, and public reputation.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (pp. 113–115). Chicago: Moody Press.

Review

Essential Commitments of a Local Church Pt. 8

I. We are Committed to a High View God Rather than a Deification of Man.

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IX. We are Committed to the Return of Jesus Christ rather than the Riches of Earth

1. The Rules

2. The Requirements

1 Timothy 3:1–13 (NKJV)

Qualifications of Overseers

3 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. ² A bishop then must be **blameless**,

3 This is a faithful saying: If a man **desires** the position of a bishop, he **desires** a good work.

3 This is a faithful saying:

As noted in **chapter 3** of this volume, the phrase **a trustworthy statement** is unique to the Pastoral Epistles, appearing five times (cf. 1:15; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8). Each time, it introduces a basic truth of great importance and familiarity among believers. **A trustworthy statement** is an obvious, self-evident truth that doesn't need proof

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (pp. 92–93). Chicago: Moody Press.

desires

The attitude commended toward the office of the ἐπίσκοπος is expressed in the verb ὀρέγομαι** (here; 6:10; Heb. 11:16, all three middle and figurative), literally “stretch oneself, reach out one’s hand,” figuratively “aspire to, strive for, desire”

Knight, G. W. (1992). *The Pastoral Epistles: a commentary on the Greek text* (p. 154). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

desires

ἐπιθυμέω means “desire” or “long for,” with genitive of the thing desired (BAGD; Robertson, *Grammar*, 508; BDF §171.1) and is comparable to the expression “set one’s heart on” (see LSJM and Thayer)

Knight, G. W. (1992). *The Pastoral Epistles: a commentary on the Greek text* (p. 154). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

Desires is from *epithumeō*, which means “a passionate compulsion,” in this context for good rather than for evil. In contrast to *oregō*, this verb refers to the inward feeling of desire. Taken together, the two terms describe the man who outwardly pursues the ministry because of a driving compulsion on the inside

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (pp. 95–96). Chicago: Moody Press.

The man truly called to the ministry is marked by both an inward consuming passion and a disciplined outward pursuit. For him the ministry is not the best option, it is the only option. There is nothing else he could do with his life that would fulfill him.

Accordingly, he works diligently to prepare himself to be qualified for service. While some may be called later in life, from that point on nothing else will do.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 96). Chicago: Moody Press.

2 A bishop then must be **blameless**,

423 **anepílēptos** (from **1** /A "not" and **1949** / epilambánomai, "apprehend") – properly, not apprehended (found wrong) when censured or attacked, i.e. without blame in light of the whole picture. Here the person (accuser) trying to seize someone's

character by unjustified censure is shown to be groundless, i.e. when the matter is understood in its full context.

Anepilēemptos (**above reproach**) means “not able to be held.” The man who is above reproach cannot be arrested and held as if he were a criminal; there is nothing for which to accuse him. In Titus 1:6, the same idea of being above reproach is conveyed, but a different term (*anengklētos*—“unreprovable”) is used.

The present participle *einai* (**be**) indicates he is in a present state of being above reproach. Obviously, it does not mean he has not committed sins in his life. What it does mean is that his life has not been marred by some obvious sinful defect in character which would preclude him setting the highest standard for godly conduct. He must be a model for the congregation to follow (cf. Phil. 3:17; 2 Thess. 3:9; Heb. 13:7; 1 Peter 5:3). He also must not give the enemies of the church reason to attack its reputation.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 103). Chicago: Moody Press.

the husband of one wife,

one woman man, speaks of character more than martial status. He is not known as a womanizer, a lustful man.

Now, to consider the meaning of the words, “the husband of one wife.” The Greek is *mias* (μίας) (one)

gunaikos (γυναικος) (woman) *andra* (άνδρα) (man). The word “man” is not *anthrōpos* (άνθρωπος), the generic term for man, but *anēr* (άνηρ), the term used of a male individual of the human race. The other two words are in the genitive case, while *anēr* (άνηρ) is in the accusative. The literal translation is, “a man of one woman.” The words, when used of the marriage relation come to mean, “a husband of one wife.” The two nouns are without the definite article, which construction emphasizes character or nature.

Wuest, K. S. (1997).

[Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader](#) (Vol. 7, p. 53). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Paul is not referring to a leader’s marital status, as the absence of the definite article in the original indicates. Rather, the issue is his moral, sexual behavior. Many men married only once are not one-woman men. Many with one wife are unfaithful to that wife. While remaining married to one woman is commendable, it is no indication or guarantee of moral purity.

Some may wonder why Paul begins his list with this quality. He does so because it is in this area, above all others, where leaders seem most prone to fall. The failure to be a one-woman man has put more men out of the ministry than any other sin. It is thus a matter of grave concern.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). [1 Timothy](#) (p. 104). Chicago: Moody Press.

Various interpretations have been offered that evade the meaning of this standard. Some have argued that its intent is to forbid polygamy. A man could not, however, even be a member of the church if he was a polygamist, let alone a leader. If that were all Paul meant, it would be an unnecessary prohibition. Further, polygamy was not an issue in Ephesus. It was uncommon in Roman society, in part because sexual encounters outside of marriage as well as divorces were easily obtainable. Nor was polygamy a feature of first-century Jewish society.

Others maintain that Paul here forbids remarriage after the death of a spouse. As already noted, however, this standard, like all the rest, refers to moral character, not marital status. Further, the Scriptures permit and honor second marriages under the proper circumstances. Paul expected younger widows to remarry and raise a family (1 Tim. 5:14), and widows could be described as one-man women (5:9). In 1 Corinthians 7:39 he wrote, “A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.”

Still others hold that this qualification excludes divorced men from spiritual leadership. That again ignores the fact that Paul is not here referring to marital status. Nor does the Bible forbid all remarriage after a divorce. In Matthew 5:31–32 and 19:9, our Lord

permitted remarriage when a divorce was caused by adultery. Paul gave a second occasion when remarriage is permitted, when the unbelieving spouse initiates the divorce (1 Cor. 7:15). While God hates all divorce (Mal. 2:16), He is gracious to the innocent party in those two situations. Since remarriage in and of itself is not a sin, it is not necessarily a blight on a man's character. If divorce resulted from a man's inability to lead his family (v. 5), however, then it is a disqualification.

Nor does Paul intend to exclude single men from the ministry. If that was his point here, he would have disqualified himself, since he was single (1 Cor. 7:8).

A one-woman man is a man devoted in his heart and mind to the woman who is his wife. He loves, desires, and thinks only of her. He maintains sexual purity in both his thought life and his conduct. That qualification was especially important in Ephesus, where sexual evil was rampant. Many, if not most, of the congregation had at one time or another fallen prey to sexual evil. If that was before a man came to Christ, it wasn't a problem (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). If it happened after his conversion, even before he assumed a leadership role, it was a problem. If it happened after he assumed a leadership role, it was a definite disqualification. Those same standards apply to men in positions of spiritual leadership today. Scripture makes clear that sexual sin is a reproach that never goes away. Proverbs 6:32–33

says of the adulterer, “The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; he who would destroy himself does it. Wounds and disgrace he will find, and his reproach will not be blotted out.” Paul also indicates that failure to keep the body pure and controlled results in being disqualified for preaching (1 Cor. 9:27).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (pp. 104–105). Chicago: Moody Press.

temperate,

A leader in God’s church must also be **temperate**. *Nēphalios* (**temperate**) literally means “wineless,” or “unmixed with wine.” While it is true that wine “makes man’s heart glad” (Ps. 104:15), it also has the potential for great harm. That is why it was commonly diluted with water in biblical times. Even so, it retained its potential for harm to those who drank it unmixed or to excess. Proverbs 20:1 warns, “Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.” Proverbs 23:29–35 graphically describes one snared by wine:

Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long over wine, those who go to taste mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings

like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your mind will utter perverse things. And you will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea, or like one who lies down on the top of a mast. “They struck me, but I did not become ill; they beat me, but I did not know it. When shall I awake? I will seek another drink.”

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (pp. 105–106). Chicago: Moody Press.

In a metaphorical sense, *nēphalios* means “alert,” “watchful,” “vigilant,” or “clear-headed.” That may be its primary sense in this passage. A leader must be one who thinks clearly. He must possess the inner strength to refrain from any excess that would dull his alertness.

William Hendriksen writes, “His pleasures are not primarily those of the senses ... but those of the

SOUL” (*New Testament Commentary: The Pastoral Epistles* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981], 122).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 106). Chicago: Moody Press.

sober-minded,

4998 **sōphrōn** (from *sōos*, "sound, safe" and 5424 /*phrēn*, "inner outlook" which regulates outward behavior) – properly, safe (sound) because moderated, referring to what is prudent because correctly (divinely) balanced (which is far more than being "the middle of the road").

4998 /*sōphrōn* ("acting in God's definition of balance") makes someone genuinely temperate, i.e. well-balanced from God's perspective. True balance is not "one-size-fits-

all" nor is it blandly static. Biblical moderation ([4998](#) / *sōphrōn*) describes "a man who does not command himself, but rather is commanded by God" (K. Wuest, *Word Studies*, 2, 46). This root (*sōphro-*, "soundness") then reflects living in God-defined balance.

This quality is the result of being temperate. The **prudent** man is well-disciplined, and knows how to correctly order his priorities. He is a person who is serious about spiritual things. That does not mean he is cold and humorless, but that he views the world through God's eyes. The realities that the world is lost, disobedient to God, and bound for hell leave little room for frivolity in his ministry. Such a man has a sure and steady mind. He is not rash in judgment, but thoughtful, earnest, and cautious. He follows Paul's counsel in *Philippians 4:8*: "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things." His mind will be controlled by God's truth, not the whims of the flesh. Jesus Christ will reign supreme over every area of his life.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). [1 Timothy](#) (pp. 106–107). Chicago: Moody Press.

of good behavior,

Fourth, an overseer must be (of good behavior), **respectable**. *Kosmios* (**respectable**) carries the idea of “orderly.” A man **prudent** in mind will have a **respectable**, or orderly life. His well-disciplined mind leads to a well-disciplined life. “The ministry is no place for the man whose life is a continual confusion of unaccomplished plans and unorganized activities”

(Homer A. Kent, Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles* [Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH Books, 1982], 127).

As noted in chapter 7 of this volume, the word *kosmos*, from which *kosmios* derives, is the opposite of “chaos.” A spiritual leader must not have a chaotic, but an orderly lifestyle. If he cannot order his own life, how can he bring order to the church (v. 5)?

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). [1 Timothy](#) (p. 107). Chicago: Moody Press.

hospitable,

church leaders must be **hospitable**. That word translates *philoxenos*, a compound word from the Greek words for “to love,” and “strangers.” The word thus literally means “to love strangers.” It is a frequently commanded Christian virtue (cf. Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9). It does not refer to entertaining friends, but showing hospitality to strangers

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). [1 Timothy](#) (p. 107). Chicago: Moody Press.

The door of the Christian home, as well as the heart of the Christian family, ought to be open to all who come in need. That is especially true of the overseer. Elders are not elevated to a place where they are unapproachable. They are to be available. A pastor's life and home are to be open so that his true character is manifest to all who come there, friend or stranger.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). [*1 Timothy*](#) (p. 108). Chicago: Moody Press.

able to teach;

The overseer in the church must be **able to teach**. Here is the only qualification that relates specifically to his giftedness and function. *Didaktikos* (**able to teach**) appears only here and in 2 Timothy 2:24 in the New Testament. An elder must be a highly skilled teacher, who works hard in his studies and proclamation (cf. 5:17). That is the one qualification that sets him apart from the deacons. Since, as noted below, the primary duty of the overseer is to preach and teach the Word of God, being gifted for that is crucial.

Some may wonder why Paul includes this qualification in the midst of a list of moral qualities. He does so because effective teaching is woven into the moral character of the teacher. What a man is cannot be divorced from what he says. "He that means as he speaks," writes Richard Baxter, "will surely do as he speaks" (*The Reformed Pastor*, 63)

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 108). Chicago: Moody Press.

3 not given to wine,

Another requirement for one who desires to be an elder is that he **not be addicted to wine**. This quality is not concerned with whether or not he gets drunk. Obviously, someone given to drunkenness would in no way be qualified for the ministry. An elder who is **not addicted to wine** is a man who does not have a reputation as a drinker. He doesn't frequent bars or involve himself in the scenes associated with drinking.

The Bible points out the tragic consequences when leaders are drinkers. Isaiah blasted the spiritual leaders of Israel for this very sin: "And these also reel with wine and stagger from strong drink: The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are confused by wine, they stagger from strong drink; they reel while having visions, they totter when rendering judgment" (Isa. 28:7).

A man who is a drinker has no place in the ministry. He is a poor example, and will surely be the cause of serious sin and disaster in the lives of others who follow his example as drinkers, justifying their indulgence because of their leader. A leader must be a man whose associations are radically different from those of the

world, and whose example leads others to righteous conduct, not sin.

In ancient times most people consumed wine, since it was the staple liquid to drink. The water was impure, and mixing the wine with water not only significantly diluted the alcohol content, but purified the water. A mixture of eight parts water to one part wine was common, so as to avoid any dissipating effect. Timothy was even reluctant to take the mixed wine, so as not to set an example that could cause someone to stumble.

Thus, he was committed to abstinence, and Paul had to tell him, “no longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments” (5:23). Drinking only water was contributing to his poor health.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (pp. 110–111). Chicago: Moody Press.

not violent,

Nor may an elder be **pugnacious**. *Mē plēktēs* (**pugnacious**) literally means “not a giver of blows,” or “not a striker.” A leader in the church must not be one who reacts to difficulty with physical violence. He must not settle disputes with blows. He must react to situations calmly, coolly, and gently (cf. 2 Tim. 2:24–25).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 111). Chicago: Moody Press.

not greedy for money,

866 aphilárgyros (from 1 /A, "not," 5368 /philéō, "fond of" and 696 /árgyros, "silver") – properly, "not fond of silver," i.e. not covetous for money; free from the love of materialism; not dominated (over-influenced) by the desire for financial gain; non-materialistic. See also 5365 /philargyría ("love of money").

It is a perverse corruption of the ministry to be in it for money. Love of money is what is at the heart of all motivation for false teachers (cf. 1 Thess. 2:5; 1 Peter 5:2; 2 Peter 2:1–3, 14; Jude 16, etc.). Paul reminded Timothy that

godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang. (1 Tim. 6:6–10)

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 111). Chicago: Moody Press.

Paul was **free from the love of money**. He assured the Ephesian elders that, during his three years of ministry in their city, he had “coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes” (Acts 20:33; cf. 1 Cor. 9:1–16; 2 Cor. 11:9; 12:15–16; 1 Thess. 2:5). A leader must not be greedy, stingy, or financially ambitious. “The earth-bound desires of a covetous spirit always clip the wings of faith and love” (Geoffery B. Wilson, *The Pastoral Epistles*

[Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982], 50).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (pp. 111–112). Chicago: Moody Press.

not covetous;

This word is not in the earliest manuscripts

146. αἰσχροκερδής **aischrokerdēs**; from 150 and 2771; *greedy of base gain*:—fond of sordid gain(2), sordid gain(2).

Thomas, R. L. (1998). *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

but gentle,

Epieikēs (**gentle**) describes the person who is considerate, genial, forbearing, and gracious, who easily pardons human failure. Such a person remembers good, not evil. He does not keep a list of all the wrongs done to him, or hold a grudge. Many men leave the ministry because they can’t accept criticism. A leader, when wronged, must have no thought of retaliation.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 111). Chicago: Moody Press.

not quarrelsome,

Uncontentious translates *amachos*, which means “peaceful,” or “reluctant to fight.” It refers not so much to physical violence as to a quarrelsome person. To have a contentious person in leadership will result in disunity and disharmony, seriously hindering the effectiveness of that leadership team.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 111). Chicago: Moody Press.

4 one who rules his own house well,

It is not enough for the overseer to have an exemplary personal life, he must also have an exemplary home life. He must not be, like Talkative in Pilgrim’s Progress, “a saint abroad, and a devil at home” (John Bunyan, *Pilgrim’s Progress* [reprint; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976], 76). The family is the proving ground for leadership skills

Throughout history, there have been those who advocated celibacy for spiritual leaders. Such a faction existed in Ephesus (cf. 4:3). In contrast, however, the Word of God assumes that a leader will be married and have a family. Although that does not eliminate single men, it is nevertheless the norm. Spiritual leaders are to be successful leaders in the family.

Manages means “presides,” or “has authority over.” The same word is translated “rule” in 5:17, showing the link between leading the home and leading the church. In the home, as in the church, it is God’s plan for men to assume the leadership role (cf. 2:9–15).

Well is from *kalos*, a rich word that could also be translated “excellently.” Its meaning can be better understood by comparing it to *agathos*. *Agathos* means “inherently,” “morally,” or “practically good.” *Kalos* takes that a step further and adds the idea of aesthetically good, beautiful, and appealing to the eye. An elder must be one whose leadership in the home is not only intrinsically good, but also visibly good.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 116). Chicago: Moody Press.

It is possible for a man to meet the moral qualifications for a pastor, yet be disqualified because of his evident lack of leadership in the home.....

Household includes an elder’s family and more, because it reaches to everything connected with the home. He must be a good steward of his house and his finances—all the people and resources over which he has responsibility. Someone, for example, who managed his family well, but mismanaged his money and possessions, would be disqualified. The man who serves as a pastor must demonstrate that he can lead people to salvation and sanctification because he has

done that in his own home—which is a model, a pattern for all homes to follow.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 116). Chicago: Moody Press.

4 **having his children in submission with all reverence**

Further, a leader in the church must keep **his children under control with all dignity**. That qualification is not meant to exclude men without children, but merely assumes they will be present. *Hupotagē* (**under control**) is a military term. It speaks of lining up in rank under one in authority. An elder’s children are to be respectful, well-disciplined,... **Dignity** includes courtesy, humility, and competence. It could be translated “respect,” or “stateliness.” An elder’s children must bring honor to their parents. The obvious implication is that his family is ordered, disciplined, not rebellious, as Paul adds in Titus 1:6, “not accused of dissipation or rebellion.” He also demands in that same verse that the elder have “children who believe.” (See other view below as to whether the children need to be believing) The point is that one given the task of leading men and women to justification, sanctification, and service in the church must have shown in the home that he is capable of such leadership.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (pp. 116–117). Chicago: Moody Press.

The determination of this ability “to rule” is seen (1) in the submission of a man’s children (v. 4b) and

(2) in the way in which this submission is manifested (v. 4c). To the question whether this statement requires one to have children to be an ἐπίσκοπος (or a διάκονος), or is rather stating what must be true in the usual situation, the reader is referred to the related question in regard to a wife and the negative answer given above at 3:2.

Although τέκνον can be used of an adult (e.g., 1:2, 18; 5:4), the qualification ἐν ὑποταγῇ indicates that the “children” in view are those under authority and therefore those not yet of age (cf. the ὑπο- concept in Gal. 4:2ff.: ἄχρι τῆς προθεσμίας τοῦ πατρός). ὑποταγή** (2 Cor. 9:13; Gal. 2:5; 1 Tim. 2:11; 3:4) is used in the NT only in the passive sense of “subjection, subordination, or obedience.” Since the word is used in its four NT occurrences of different situations, the nuance of meaning for ὑποταγή in each situation differs accordingly. For the phrase τέκνα ἐν ὑποταγῇ the note of obedience may be presumed in the light of Eph. 6:1ff. and Col. 3:20 (τὰ τέκνα ὑπακούετε).

The subjection shown by the children must reflect the character of their father’s leadership

Knight, G. W. (1992). *The Pastoral Epistles: a commentary on the Greek text* (p. 161). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

With “having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion,” it is not demanded that the

elder have children but only that, if he has them, they should be πιστά τέκνα (on τέκνα see 1 Tim. 3:4, 12). ἔχων is used here “to denote the possession of persons to whom one has close relationships” (BAGD s.v. I.2ba). The implication is that Paul is talking only about children who are still rightfully under their father’s authority in his home (cf. ἐν ὑποταγῇ and the repeated τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου of 1 Tim. 3:4–5).

Should πιστά in this clause be understood as “faithful” or as “believing”? The range of usage shows that either meaning is a possibility: The word can clearly mean “faithful,” as it does several times in the PE, including once with a noun, as here (2 Tim. 2:2: πιστοὶ ἄνθρωποι). It can also mean “believing” and does on several occasions in the PE, again including once with a noun (1 Tim. 6:2: πιστοὶ ... δεσπότηι). The context here and the parallel in 1 Tim. 3:4–5, however, provide some important indicators: The qualifying statement here, “not accused of dissipation or rebellion,” emphasizes behavior and seems to explain what it means for τέκνα to be πιστά. Likewise 1 Tim. 3:4 speaks of the overseer “keeping his children under control with all dignity.” In both cases the overseer is evaluated on the basis of his control of his children and their conduct. It is likely, therefore, that τέκνα ἔχων πιστά here is virtually equivalent to τέκνα ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ in 1 Tim. 3:4. If that is so, then πιστά here means “faithful” in the sense of “submissive” or

“obedient,” as a servant or steward is regarded as πιστός when he carries out the requests of his master (Mt. 24:45f.; 25:21, 23; Lk. 12:42f.; 1 Cor. 4:2; cf. Thayer, *Lexicon*; Cremer, *Lexicon*; LSJM s.v.; R. Bultmann, *TDNT* VI, 175, all but Thayer giving “obedient” as one of the meanings for the word and referring to Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.4.30; MM mentions a deed of sale in which a slave is described as πιστοῦ καὶ ἀδράστου, “faithful and not given to running away”; Horsley, *New Documents* II [1982] 53 gives an epitaph for a slave that says “I remain faithful [πιστός] as before” [cf. *ibid.* 3 (1983) 39]; Bultmann cites Hesychius: πιστός= εὐπειθής, ready to obey, obedient). This proposed understanding of the passage goes contrary to a consistent pattern in recent English translations (*RSV, NEB, TEV*: “believers”; similarly *NASB, NIV*), but the considerations cited above seem compelling.

The concluding part of the verse, μὴ ἐν κατηγορίᾳ ἀσωτίας ἢ ἀνυπότακτα, literally “not in an accusation of dissipation or rebellious,” negatively qualifies πιστά and thus indicates what may not characterize πιστά children. The negative particle μὴ is used here, rather than οὐκ, probably because the participle ὄντα is understood with this construction (H. C. G. Moule, 155). μὴ ἐν κατηγορίᾳ** (the noun occurs in Jn. 18:29; 1 Tim. 5:19) can best be expressed in English by “not accused of.” ἀσωτία** (here genitive of the content of

the accusation) means “debauchery” or “dissipation” and is used in the NT of drunkenness (Eph. 5:18) and of associated vices of the non-Christian world (1 Pet. 4:4; cf. ἀσώτως in Lk. 15:13). Therefore the potential elder’s children must not be guilty of “sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties” (1 Pet. 4:3).

ἀνυπότακτα stands in tandem with the preceding prepositional phrase and its genitive modifier. Here it means “undisciplined, disobedient, rebellious,” as it does in 1 Tim. 1:9, where it is used of those who are unwilling to be under God’s will and law, and in Tit. 1:10 of the false teachers who “turn away from the truth” (v. 14). What must not characterize the children of an elder is immorality and undisciplined rebelliousness, if the children are still at home and under his authority. Paul is not asking any more of the elder and his children than is expected of every Christian father and his children. However, only if a man exercises such proper control over his children may he be an elder.

Knight, G. W. (1992). *The Pastoral Epistles: a commentary on the Greek text* (pp. 289–290). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

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

The reason a church leader must have a well-managed home is obvious: **If a man does not know how to**

manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God? The phrase **church of God** should be taken as a reference to a local assembly (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1). **Take care of** is from *epimelomai*, a broad term that is used in our Lord's parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:34–35). An elder is responsible for leading people to God, to holiness, to obedience, and to witness—crucial matters that must be tested in his own home. Resolving conflict, building unity, maintaining love, and serving each other are essentials to church life that are challenges also in the home. If he succeeds in his family, he is likely to succeed in God's family. If not, he is disqualified.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 117). Chicago: Moody Press.

6 not a novice,

lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.

Since one of the great dangers facing the overseer is pride, humility is an essential qualification. *Neophutos* (**new convert**) appears only here in the New Testament. It is used in extrabiblical Greek to refer to a newly planted tree, hence its metaphorical use here. An elder must not be newly baptized as a Christian, **lest**

he become conceited. Placing him in a leadership role would expose him to the temptation of pride

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (pp. 117–118). Chicago: Moody Press.

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

having a good reputation in the community, an elder will avoid **the snare of the devil**. The genitive here is subjective, and refers to the snare set by Satan. God does not set traps for his people (cf. James 1:13), but Satan would like nothing better than to set a trap to discredit a leader in the church. D. Edmond Hiebert writes,

For one who has an unsavory reputation in the community, to be placed by the church into a prominent place of authority would be to draw upon himself and the church the reproach of the world. The suspicion and censure thus arrayed against him and the church might easily weaken and discourage the elder. Thus weakened and disheartened he might readily fall an easy prey into some skillfully laid snare of the Devil, who is here vividly pictured as a hunter of souls. Such a

fall would cause great harm to his own soul and bring terrible damage to the church. The enemy's aim has always been to destroy the leaders of the church. Hence great care must be exercised in the selection of its leaders. (*First Timothy* [Chicago: Moody, 1957], 68)

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (pp. 119–120). Chicago: Moody Press.

Qualifications of Deacons

⁸ Likewise deacons *must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine,*

Men of dignity translates *semnos*, which could also be translated “serious,” or “stately.” *Semnos* contains the idea of being serious in mind as well as in character. It comes from a root word (*sebomai*) that means “to venerate,” or “to worship.” Those characterized by it have a majestic quality of character that makes people stand in awe of them. A synonym of *semnos*, *hieroprepēs*, “expresses that which beseems a sacred person, thing, or act” (Richard C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids:

Eerdmans, 1983], 348). A deacon must not be a silly, flippant person, one who makes light of serious matters. Although not a cold, joyless person, a deacon understands the seriousness of life.

After that positive trait come three negative ones. A deacon must **not** be **double-tongued**. *Dilogos* (**double-tongued**) appears only here in the New Testament. Some think it refers to a gossip, a person who has, so to speak, not one but two tongues going. It seems best, however, to interpret it as a prohibition against saying one thing to one person and another thing to someone else. A deacon's speech must not be hypocritical, but be characterized by integrity, consistency, and honesty. A man who tells different stories to different people will quickly lose their confidence, and manifest a duplicitous and manipulative motive.

A second prohibition forbids deacons from being **addicted to much wine**. *Prosechō* (**addicted to**) means "to turn one's mind to," or "to occupy oneself with," hence the NASB translation **addicted to**. The present active participle indicates this is to be the deacon's habitual practice. He is not to be preoccupied with drink, nor to allow it to influence his life. Some may wonder why the Lord did not call for total abstinence

V8 not greedy for money.

A deacon must also not be **fond of sordid gain**. He must not use his office as a means to make money. That was an important quality in the early church, since deacons would routinely handle money as part of their official duties. They would distribute money to widows, orphans, and others in need. The temptation would always be there to steal from those funds, as did Judas (John 12:4–6). It was essential, then, that deacons be free from any love of money that could compromise their honesty

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 128). Chicago: Moody Press.

9 holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.

Paul uses the word **mystery** frequently in his writings. It refers to revealed truth previously hidden, but now

manifested (cf. Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 15:51; Eph. 3:3–6; 6:19; Col. 1:26). **The mystery of the faith** is the New Testament revelation. Such truth was not revealed in the Old Testament. It encompasses the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ (1 Tim. 3:16), of the indwelling of Christ in believers (Col. 1:26–27), of the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ (Eph. 1:9; 3:4–6), of the saving gospel (Col. 4:3), of lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:7), and of the rapture of the church (1 Cor. 15:51–52).

The faith is the content of New Testament revealed truth. A deacon must hold to it **with a clear conscience**, that is, a conscience that does not accuse him. It is not enough merely to believe the truth (cf. James 2:19), deacons must also live it. And the stronger the theological and biblical knowledge and obedience, the stronger the affirmation of conscience. Every deacon (and every Christian) should strive to be able to say with Paul, “For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you” (2 Cor. 1:12).

The conscience is a human faculty given by God to every person, which is designed to warn each person when they have violated moral law (cf. Rom. 2:14–15). It either accuses or excuses. It either produces guilt, shame, fear, remorse, and despair over sin, or assurance, peace, and joy due to righteousness. The deacon who has a clear conscience is enjoying the latter three.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (pp. 128–129). Chicago: Moody Press.

10 But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons,

Dokimazō (**let [them] be tested**) means “to approve after testing.” The present tense of the verb indicates an ongoing test, not a onetime test, or probationary period. Deacons are to be continually tested before they officially **serve as deacons**. The test in view here is the general assessment of a believer’s service by the church. Once they become officially recognized as deacons, this evaluation goes on. **Also** refers to the discussion of elders in 3:1–7. They, too, are to be continually evaluated by the church.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 129). Chicago: Moody Press.

¹¹ Likewise, *their wives must be* reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.

v. 10 being *found* blameless.

12 Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

Deacons, no less than elders, must be **beyond reproach**. *Anegklētos* (**beyond reproach**) means “not arraigned” (as in a court), or “unblamable.” They differ in function from elders in that elders are the primary teachers of the church, while deacons help in applying their teaching. Nevertheless, the spiritual requirements for both are the same. Deacons must not have any blot on their lives, nothing for which they could be accused, arraigned, and disqualified.

Paul reiterates another key element from the qualifications given for elders. Deacons, too, must be **husbands of only one wife**. The Greek text literally reads “one-woman men” (cf. 3:2). They must not be unfaithful to their wives either in their actual conduct with other women, or in their minds. As with elders, the issue is moral character, not marital status. They are models of sexual purity.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 129). Chicago: Moody Press.

and good managers of their children and their own households. (3:12b)

Deacons, like elders, must prove their spiritual character in the home. They are to be **good managers** not only **of their children**, but also of their money, possessions, and everything associated with **their own**

households. As with elders' children, the children of deacons must be believers.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (pp. 129–130). Chicago: Moody Press.

¹³ For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

¹¹ Likewise, *their wives must be* reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.

Whether the **women** in view here are deacons' wives or a separate order of female deacons has been much disputed. The following points show that women in general, not necessarily deacons' wives are in view here. First, the use of **likewise** (cf. 1 Tim. 2:9; 3:8; Titus 2:3, 6) argues strongly for seeing a third and distinct group here in addition to elders and deacons. Second, there is no possessive pronoun or definite article connecting these **women** with deacons. Third, Paul gave no qualifications for elders' wives. Why would he do so for deacons' wives?

Fourth, Paul did not use the word "deaconesses" because there was no such word in the Greek

language; the masculine form of *diakonos* was used of both men and women (cf. Rom. 16:1). A different term, *diakonissa*, was used for “deaconess” in post-biblical Greek (Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946], 3:176). Using the term **women** was the only way Paul could distinguish them from the male deacons. Finally, their qualifications parallel those of the male deacons.

Women who serve the church must first be **dignified**. Paul uses the same word here that he used in verse 8 to describe male deacons. Female deacons, like their male counterparts, must lead serious lives. People should hold them in awe because of their spiritual devotion. They are **not** to be **malicious gossips**. *Diabolos* (**malicious gossips**) means “slanderer.” It is often used to describe Satan, and is translated “devil” (cf. Matt. 4:1). Deaconesses must control their tongues. Like elders (v. 2) and male deacons (v. 8), the women are to be **temperate**. They are not to be drinkers, but sober in judgment. Finally, they must be **faithful in all things**. They must be absolutely trustworthy. That qualification may include the idea of not being “fond of sordid gain” (cf. v. 8). Like male deacons, females would have occasion to handle money while performing their duties. Women who were not **faithful** in every dimension of responsibility could not be trusted with this privileged service.

Another Position on this text to consider.

This could refer to the wives of the elders and deacons.

Reasons:

1. It is as different group as indicated by the word “likewise”
2. It is just as likely that the word for women in this text could be understood as wives. It has been translated that way.
3. If it is to be understood as wives, then why would he only hold up the qualifications of wives of deacons and not elders.
4. If it is suppose to be deaconesses, then why isn't the qualification for marital fidelity stated regarding the women.
5. If it is suppose to be deaconesses, then why isn't it stated that they also must be tested.

1. The Rules

2. The Requirements

3. The Responsibilities

I. First Responsibility LABOR

recognize those who labor among you

Diligently labor (2872) (**kopiao [word study]** from **kopos** = labor, fatigue) This root word **kopos** (see word study) is used in secular Greek of “a beating,” “weariness” (as though one had been beaten) and “**exertion**,” was the proper word for physical tiredness induced by work, exertion or heat.

Kopiao means to physically become worn out, weary or faint. To engage in hard work with the implication of difficulty and trouble. **Kopiao** speaks of intense toil even to the point of utter exhaustion if necessary (cp elders preaching and teaching [1Ti 5:17](#)). The work described by **kopiao** was left one so weary it was as if the person had taken a beating (Paul calls Timothy and all disciples to this "backbreaking labor" [so to speak] in order to make disciples - [2Ti 2:6-note](#)). **Kopiao** describes not so much the actual exertion as the weariness which follows the straining of all one's powers to the utmost.

Stedman writes that those in **leaders** word hard...

They spend hours toiling in difficult and sometimes demeaning work. Contrary to what some people think, it is not true that pastors work only one day a week. The ministry is a very demanding job. (Ibid)

MacArthur adds that **kopiao**

does not stress the amount of work, but rather the effort. A man's reward from God is proportional to the excellence of his ministry and the effort he puts into it. Excellence combined with diligence mark a man worthy of the highest honor. (MacArthur, John: 1 Timothy Moody Press or Logos)

ACTS 20:35 In everything I (Paul) showed you that by **working hard** in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Romans 16:6 (note) Greet Mary, who has **worked hard** for you...

16:12 (note) Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has **worked hard** in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 4:12 and we **toil**, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure;

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. (**Comment:** Note the juxtaposition of human effort and God's grace. We are to work hard and yet it is God working in and through us and thus He alone receives the glory!)

Galatians 4:11 I fear for you, that perhaps I have **labored** over you in vain. (Comment: Paul fear that some might fall prey to the false teaching of the Judaizers who added works and legalism to salvation by faith alone.)

Philippians 2:16 (note) (The saints at Philippi were to keep holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor **toil** in vain.

Colossians 1:29 (note) And for this purpose (to present every man complete in Christ, a mature believer ever being conformed to the image of the Son) also I **labor** (*kopiao*), striving (*agonizomai*) (How?) according to His power, which mightily works (Greek = *energeo* ~ God's power, His grace, His Spirit, "*energized*" Paul) within me.

1Timotny 4:10 (note) For it is for this (with a view to the promise which godliness holds forth so that it might actually be fulfilled -- see note 1Ti 4:8) we **labor** (*kopiao*) and strive (*agonizomai*), because we have fixed our hope on the living God, Who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who **work hard** at preaching and teaching.

2 Timothy 2:6 (note) The **hard-working** farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops

II. Authority over the Sheep

and are over you in the Lord

Have charge over (4291) (**proistemi** from **pró** = before, over + **hístemi** = put, place, stand) literally means those who are put or placed before you or over you. **Proistemi** has the basic meaning of “standing before” others and, hence, the idea of leadership. It describes one who presides over others, and exercises a position of leadership (rule, direct, be at the head of).

Rogers writes that **proistemi** has two possible meanings in this passage

either to preside, lead, direct or to protect , to care for.

(Rogers, C L - originally by Fritz Rienecker: *New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*. Zondervan. 1998)

In secular Greek **proistemi** was used in some context (not these ways in NT) meaning to put forward as a pretence or use as a screen. To stand before so as to guard.

Proistemi (as in this passage) also includes the idea of having an interest in, showing concern for, caring for or giving aid.

Hiebert adds that **proistemi**...

literally means "standing before," hence to be at the head, to direct, to rule. It may denote informal leadership or management of any kind, but papyrus usage establishes that it can be used of various kinds of officials.' It points to the spiritual guidance these men are giving to the church, a recognized function of the elder. It combines the concepts of leading, protecting, and caring for.' (Ibid)

Here are the 7 other NT uses of **proistemi** and is rendered -- engage in (2), have charge over(1), leads(1), manage(1), managers(1), manages(1), rule(1).

Romans 12:8 (note) or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who **leads** (stands on the first place), with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

1 Timothy 3:4 He (**overseer**) must be one who **manages** (**proistemi** - to stand before, to rule over, to manage. Note that in

the ancient Greek culture, the authority of the father was exceedingly great.) his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity 5 (but if a man does not know how to **manage** (proistemi) his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)

1 Timothy 3:12 Let deacons be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households.

1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders who **rule well** (Guthrie notes that the word means general superintendence and describes the duties allotted to all presbyters) be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

Titus 3:8 (note) This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to **engage** (here **proistemi** speaks of a responsible preoccupation with something. Take the lead in. Be careful to busy yourself with. The word also has a technical meaning - "to practice a profession") in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.

Titus 3:14 (note) And let our people also learn to **engage** (proistemi) in good deeds to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

There are 5 uses of **proistemi** in the non-apocryphal Septuagint - [2Sam. 13:17](#); [Pr. 23:5](#); [26:17](#); [Isa. 43:24](#); [Amos 6:10](#)

In the Lord - This phrase clearly identifies these men not as secular leaders (as one might think of leading men in the community) but as those who lead in connection with spiritual concerns **in** the sphere of the Lord -- as His appointees, under His authority, etc

Stedman comments that...

Leaders have been appointed by the Lord Jesus, regardless of the human process by which they were

chosen. That does not mean that they cannot be changed or that in the course of events they will not go someplace else. What it means is that when they are in leadership they are to be regarded as the Lord's men and the Lord's women. He has sent them among us. (Ibid)

Hiebert adds that...

Their position does not stem from personal ambition but rather from their spiritual maturity. Their position of leadership in the church is based upon the recognized fact that both they and those being led are **in the Lord**. "His Lordship underlies their leadership." Their authority is not that of a formal ecclesiastical hierarchy but rather is "one exercised in the warmth of Christian bonds." (Ibid)

We're not self-appointed. It's not manmade. You didn't give us that authority. We didn't take it on our own. It's not from men. We are called, equipped, appointed by God. It is our duty to rule for His sake, the Lord's sake, not for personal power, personal prestige, personal gain, personal career advancement, but for the Lord. That little phrase "in the Lord" is the sphere in which our authority rests. Our authority is in Him. He delegated it to us. We only have it as we're obedient to His Word and His will. We have a delegated authority. It is not our own, and it does not go beyond the expression of His will, in His Word and through His Spirit. And so, we are given authority, but only in the Lord, not beyond that.

III. Instruction

admonish you,

Give instruction (3560) (warning, cautioning, gently reproving, exhorting) (**noutheteo** [word study] from **noús** = mind + **títhemi** = place) literally means to place in the mind and so to warn or give notice to beforehand especially of danger or evil. The idea is to lay it on the mind or heart of the person, with the stress being on influencing not only the intellect, but also the will, emotions and disposition. The idea is to counsel about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct. **Noutheteo** has the connotation of confronting with the intent of changing one's attitudes and actions.

Noutheteo is in the **present tense** which indicating that these leaders were continually admonishing, warning, cautioning, etc. It often conveys an implication of blame attached or of calling attention to faults or defects. It follows that noutheteo speaks of the activity of reminding someone of what he has forgotten or is in danger of forgetting. It may involve a rebuke for wrongdoing as well as a warning to be on guard against wrongdoing. It directs an appeal to the conscience and will of one being admonished in order to stir him to watchfulness or obedience.

Morris remarks

While its tone is brotherly, it is big-brotherly

English dictionaries state that to **admonish** is to indicate duties or obligations to; to express warning or disapproval to especially in a gentle, earnest, or solicitous manner; to give friendly earnest advice or encouragement to; to reprove firmly but not harshly; to advise to do or against doing something; warn; caution.

Paul in his parting words to the Ephesian elders reminded them that

"from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" and therefore they had to "be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years (note what

Paul did for 3 years! **Is this an active aspect of ministry in the modern day church?**) I did not cease to **admonish** (noutheteo) each one with tears." ([Acts 20:30, 31](#))

In a note on the [Romans 15:14](#) passage **John MacArthur** writes that **noutheteo**...

is a **comprehensive term for counseling**. In this context, it refers to coming alongside other Christians for **spiritual and moral counseling**. Paul is not referring to a special gift of counseling, but of the duty and responsibility that every believer has for encouraging and strengthening other believers. Tragically, many Christians today have been convinced that competent counseling can only be accomplished by a person who is trained in the principles of secular psychology—despite the fact that the various schools of psychology are, for the most part, at extreme odds with God’s Word and frequently with each other. Although they may profess that “all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” ([2Ti 3:16-note](#)), many evangelicals—both those who give and those who receive counseling—do not rely on the full sufficiency of God’s Word.... When God’s Word rules our hearts (cf [Col 3:16-note](#)), His Holy Spirit makes us “rich in the true wisdom” and prepares us to admonish one another, to “teach and help one another along the right road.” The place for Christians to counsel and be counseled is in the church. That is not, of course, to say that it must be done in a church building, but that it be Christian counseling Christian. That principle applies to general admonitions among fellow believers, as Paul mentions in

this text, as well as to counseling regarding more serious and prolonged problems confronted by a biblically oriented and spiritually gifted Christian minister." (MacArthur, J: Romans 9-16. Chicago: Moody Press or Logos) (bolding added, reference links added)

Paul considered himself a spiritual father to the local churches, and it was his duty to warn his children --

"I do not write these things to shame you, but to **admonish** you as my beloved children" ([1Corinthians 4:14](#))

Children who are not warned can get in a lot of trouble! Using the noun form (nouthesia) Paul instructs fathers, writing...

"And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and **instruction** (**nouthesia**) of the Lord." ([Ep 6:4-note](#))

Fathers, are you warning your children? It is critical for their well being in a amoral society which has run amuck and scoffs at the life giving Biblical principles like this one in Ephesians! In **admonishment** there is a moral emphasis, in **teaching** a doctrinal emphasis.

The **Wycliffe Bible commentary** says that

"The 'doctor of souls' has a warning and teaching ministry, not self-centered but patient-centered."

Listen to what Richard Baxter said several centuries ago. "To preach a sermon, what skill is necessary to make the truth plain, to convince the hearers, to let irresistible light into their consciences, and keep it there, and drive all home; to screw the truth into their minds, and work Christ into their

affections; to meet every objection, and clearly to resolve it; to drive sinners to a stand, and make them see that there is no hope, but that they must unavoidably either be converted or condemned – and to do all this, as regards language and style, as befits our work, and yet as is most suitable to the capacities of the hearers? This, and a great deal more that should be done in every sermon, must surely require a great deal of holy skill.

So great a God, whose message we deliver, should be honored by our delivery of it. It is a lamentable case, that in the message from the God of heaven of everlasting moment to the souls of men, we should behave ourselves so weakly, so unhandsomely, so imprudently, or so slightly, that the whole business should miscarry in our hands, and God should be dishonored, and His work disgraced, and sinners rather hardened than converted; and all this through our weakness or neglect. How often have carnal hearers gone home jeering at the palpable and dishonorable failings of the preacher? How many sleep under us, because our hearts and tongues are sleepy, and we bring not with us so much skill and zeal as to awake them?", end quote.

No king, no President, no politician, no doctor, no lawyer, no judge, no military commander on earth has such an awesome responsibility as the one who shepherds the sheep by giving instruction out of the Word of God. To prostitute that is a frightening, frightening error.

George Liddell wrote,

Give me a man of God—one man,
Whose faith is master of his mind,
And I will right all wrongs
And bless the name of all mankind.

Give me a man of God—one man,
Whose tongue is touched with heaven's fire,
And I will flame the darkest hearts
With high resolve and clean desire.

Give me a man of God—one man,
One mighty prophet of the Lord,
And I will give you peace on earth,
Bought with a prayer and not a sword.

Give me a man of God—one man,
True to the vision that he sees,
And I will build your broken shrines,
And bring the nations to their knees.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 94). Chicago: Moody Press.

Unbelief in an Elder's Children — Exegesis

Article

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He must manage his own household well,
with all dignity keeping his children submissive,
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

. . . appoint elders in every town as I directed you—

. . . above reproach,

the husband of one wife,

and his children are believers

and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

— Titus 1:6

May a man have children who are unbelievers and yet be appointed or continue as an elder? First Timothy 3:4-5 and Titus 1:6 provoke the question.

There are two primary interpretations. Douglas Wilson summarizes the first view quite succinctly: “if a man's children fall away from the faith (either doctrinally or morally), he is at that point disqualified from formal ministry in the church.”[1] Alexander Strauch suggests the second interpretive option: “The contrast is made not between believing and unbelieving children, but between obedient, respectful children and lawless, uncontrolled children.” What is at stake, Strauch suggests, is “the children's behavior, not their eternal state.”[2]

FAITHFUL LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH AND HOME

Paul's basic logic, especially in 1 Timothy 3, is fairly clear. The rhetorical question in the second half of verse 5 (“for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?”) logically grounds his insistence on an ordered home in verse 4 (“He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive”). Because “the house of a believer ought to be like a little church,”[3] the result is that “he who cannot obtain from his children any reverence or subjection . . . will hardly be

able to restrain the people by the bridle of discipline.”[4] This means that how an elder, or potential elder, manages and orders his household are of utmost importance in determining his qualification for office. John Stott carefully summarizes the matter: “The married pastor is called to leadership in two families, his and God’s, and the former is to be the training ground of the latter.”[5] (Cf. Matthew 25:14-30—he who is faithful over a little will be faithful over much.[6]) The above analysis is rather uncontroversial among exegetes. Disagreements arise, however, when we probe more deeply into the nature of this well-ordered home.

MUST AN ELDER’S CHILDREN BE BELIEVERS?

The most controversial question surrounding these verses is whether Paul is saying that an elder’s children have to be believers, or only that they must be faithful, submissive, and obedient.

The term *pistas* can mean either “believing” or “faithful” in the Pastoral Epistles (for the former with a noun, cf. 1 Tim. 6:2; for the latter with a noun, cf. 2 Tim. 2:2). Therefore, word studies alone cannot resolve the question.

However, I want to suggest that resolution to this question can be found in comparing the parallel between Titus 1:6 and 1 Timothy 3:4. We can be reasonably certain that *tekna echonta en hupotagç* (“having children in control/submission/obedience”; 1 Tim. 3:4) is virtually synonymous with *tekna echôn pista* (“having faithful / believing children”; Titus 1:6).[7] In other words, to have *pista* children means to have children *en hupotagç*. This would mean that the final part of Titus 1:6 (“not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination”) is a description of what *pista* means.

With that in mind, here are five further reasons that incline me to believe that Paul is referring to the submission and obedience of an elder’s children, and not to their salvation.

First, the grounding question of 1 Timothy 3:5 explicitly connects the elder’s qualifications with his managerial skills in verse 4. Generally obedient behavior does not require miraculous intervention; even a good lab technician can make a rat follow a certain path if enough planning and forethought is invested. Salvific faith, however, cannot be produced as a result of good housekeeping. While a godly home is often conducive to belief, it does not produce it. If we insist that a child’s salvation is fundamentally connected to the managerial skills

of the father, we have inadvertently assigned an unbiblical role to human action. This is clearly the case with an application drawn by Stott: “An extension of the same principle may be that presbyters can hardly be expected to win strangers to Christ if they have failed to win those who are most exposed to their influence, their own children.”[8] What would this mean? If you are a good manager at your home, then unbelievers can be “expected” to come to the Lord through your ministry?

Second, even the best pastoral managers have unbelievers within their church or under their sphere of influence (cf. Gal. 1:6!). The logical consequent of this would mean that one can manage the larger household (his church) well, even though not everyone in it is a believer. If this is so, then it seems that one can manage the smaller household (his family) well, even though not all within it believe.

Third, insisting that having believing children is a prerequisite to eldership leads to some uncomfortable questions. What do we make of an elder who has a number of believing children—but one who is not? If most of his children *are* believers, is he not a good manager of his household? Or, does the one unbelieving child call into question his overall managerial ability? If it does, then why did any of his children turn out to be believers? Wilson writes: “. . . a man might decide (and, I think, should decide) to step down if one of his six children denies the faith. But if another pastor in his presbytery in the same situation does not decide to do so, and his other five children are saintly, only a crank would express his disagreement through a big church fight.”[9] Yet this seems inconsistent; for if Paul truly teaches that unbelieving children automatically disqualify a man for eldership, then the purity of the elder board *is* worth fighting over.

Fourth, all of the requirements for eldership that are listed in this passage (being married once, being temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, a good teacher, not a drunkard, not a lover of money, and not a recent convert) are actions of personal responsibility. We would expect the requirement regarding his children to be in the same category. Requiring that his children have genuine saving faith is to require personal responsibility for the salvation of another, something I don’t see taught in Scripture.

CONCLUSION

I believe, therefore, that 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are referring to the general submission and behavior of the elder’s children. God has so designed the universe that the parental role of disciplinarian, model, authority, and servant-leader generally has a profound effect upon the behavior of the children. Paul does not spell out what this looks like in every case, nor does he spell out all of the specifics of what will disqualify an elder. The general case, however, is clear:

What must not characterize the children of an elder is immorality and undisciplined rebelliousness, if the children are still at home and under his authority.[10] Paul is not asking any more of the elder and his children than is expected of every Christian father and his children. However, only if a man exercises such proper control over his children may he be an elder.[11]

May God give the pastors and elders of our churches grace and wisdom in faithfully leading both their churches and their homes.[12]

Click [here](#) for “Unbelief in an Elder’s Children—Practice,” an interview with 9Marks Executive Director Matt Schmucker

1 Douglas Wilson, “The Pastor’s Kid” in *Credenda/Agenda*, vol. 2, no. 3.

2 Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, revised & expanded (Littleton, Col.: Lewis & Roth Publishers, 1995), 229.

3 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, translated from Latin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 83 n. 1.

4 *Ibid.*, 293.

5 John Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downer’s Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 98.

6 William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WCB (Dallas: Word, 2000), 180.

7 As Andreas Kostenberger writes, “In the larger context of the teaching of the Pastoral Epistles, it would be unusual if the author had two separate standards, a more lenient one in 1 Tim. 3:4 (obedient) and a more stringent one in Titus 1:6 (believing). This creates a presumption of reading *pistos* in Titus 1:6 as conveying the sense “faithful” or “obedient” in keeping with the requirement stated

in 1 Tim. 3:4.” See <http://www.biblicalfoundations.org/?p=36>, along with his treatments in *1–2 Timothy, Titus*, in the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 12 (rev. ed.; Zondervan, 2007), pp. 606–7, and ch. 12 in *God, Marriage, and Family* (Crossway, 2004).

8 Stott, *Guard the Truth*, 176.

9 Douglas Wilson, “The Pastor’s Kid, Again” in *Credenda/Agenda*, vol. 2, no. 5.

10 See Knight, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 161, for his argument that Paul is referring to *tekna* (“children”) who are under authority and not yet of age.

11 *Ibid.*, 290.

12 I wish to thank Ray Van Neste, Tom Schreiner, and Andreas Kostenberger for offering helpful feedback on an earlier draft of this paper.

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