

The God-Qualified Pastor, p.1

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Bible Text: 1 Timothy 3:2-7
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Well, grab your Bibles and to to 1 Timothy 3 as we're going through this New Testament epistle on Sunday mornings. We call it beautifying the bride as Paul is writing to Timothy, giving him instructions on how to fashion the church and how to function as the church. So we have rich rich teaching here, ah, from this text of Scripture.

So 1 Timothy 3 is where we find ourselves and we already looked at one installment, we called it the God-called preacher, and we outlined that aspect from 1 Timothy 3:1, now we come to 1 Timothy 3:2-7 on the God-qualified pastor. There's qualifications for the office of pastor. Now this applies in the broad sense of not only just your primary preaching pastor which is the position I hold, but all church elders or pastors.

Now we begin in verse 2 of 1 Timothy 3. We're going through verse 7.

2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. 4 He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity 5 (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), 6 and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. 7 And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Now we'll just go through verses 2 and 3 this morning as it's gonna take several installments to get through this, alright? But first of all by way of introduction, notice what he says here in verse 1, the very first phrase, "An overseer, then, must be above reproach." Another equally good English translation is he must be blameless. Above reproach or blameless. Now as we're going through this character qualifications for the office of elder or pastor in the church, we note that skill and performance – now mark that, young man, mark that, older lady, mark that, church members – it's not his skill or his gift, it's his character. His character and my, I might add that's a, a long and hard thing to develop because a person can be very carnal and be very worldly but have great skills at influencing people or winning friends, or whatever he does, but he may not have the

character that qualifies him for Gospel ministry. Something we run into as we're dealing with young men and I deal with a lot of those who feel led into Gospel ministry is to work with them always lovingly, always encouragingly, but to see if they will grow to have at least a level of character that qualifies them for the office of elder.

So we're emphasizing character, not skills or abilities as we look at this text of Scripture. Um, now the, the word "blameless" or the phrase "above reproach" simply means nothing sticks. Now you have to be careful when you're dealing with the office of elder because a faithful pastor will always have enemies. People do not like being reprovved and rebuked and corrected. That's just not a comfortable thing. Matter of fact, any of you in leadership whether it's in the school or the office of the company, anybody in leadership gets fired at a lot but it's especially true in church leadership because the pastor's primary job according to Paul's command to Timothy is to preach the word, reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction. That's not a fun thing and so Satan works overtime to fire all kind of accusations against the man of God, but the point is though some of them may try to stick a little here and there, the point is he has the character that none of them have any lasting credibility to them; things tend to not stick, give it some time and watch it. In other words, these things are not his pattern, these things do not mark who he is. Now we're not talking about perfect men. Ah, every time we go over this as an elder body, without exception our elders look at one another and say, "Now, brothers, I don't know. I may not qualify." And, um, by the way, that lets me know they probably do qualify; that humility of introspection and repenting and not letting any certain, ah, character deficiency be a pattern of who they are.

Now the insight is in 1 Timothy 5:20. I'll just reference it where Paul says in 1 Timothy 5:20 if an elder continues in sin, let him be rebuked in the presence of all that the rest may be fearful of sinning. Now note the phrase there, it's the, the present, ah, tense participle which means it's a continual pattern. So elders can sin, well, and still be elders. Ah, we all sin, we all struggle with sin but an elder shouldn't be marked by observable outward, ah, sinful patterns that cause his, ah, credibility to be diminished or his reputation to be marred. So occasionally an elder has to correct one another and there was a time years ago when our elders gave me a two pages of things they wanted me to work on and it was good stuff. Now it wasn't scandalous things. I, I wasn't embezzling money. They didn't say, "We want you to quit embezzling money." Wasn't things like that but it was things that I needed to hear and, ah, we've corrected one another like that. But if there's a glaring pattern of the type of sin or character deficiency that causes reproach or discredit to the ministry and that elder will not get it corrected, then he's to be reprovved in front of all that the rest may be fearful of sinning.

So we're not talking about sinless perfection here, and by the way, all of these traits, almost all of them without exception ought to be traits that you have in your life. Ah, it's not like, well, an elder can't sin but you get to sin some. That's not what he's saying. He is saying if you haven't matured to the place where these things are absent as far as a pattern, then you're not yet ready for the office of elder. And it's been interesting through the years having a, doing this now 30, 38, 39 years in one church, how often good men, I mean men that I love and believe in will be nominated for the office of elder and we

allow them over time to privately speak with me or another church elder about whether or not they're interested, and often they don't go into a lot of detail but they say, "Pastor, there's just, it's not a church discipline issue but there's just things in my life that are patterns. I am a repentor but I just don't think it would be wise for me to be considered at this time." That tells me that man's mature and he loves the church more than he loves his position or power and I have, I have great respect for that kind of heart and that kind of attitude. And here at Grace Life Church, I'm saying this just because it's the truth, we have far far far more men who have, I believe, the spiritual and moral character for the office than we have place for them to serve. That's a wonderful blessing to have.

So as we go through this, mind yourself, examine yourselves as you think about the examination of your church elders because all of these are traits that we ought... For example, ah, he has to be sexually pure. Well, does that mean you don't have to be sexually pure? Of course not, but it means that you may have had a season of that in the last few years, in the last decade, but you're a repentor, that's in your past. We don't judge you. We welcome you. We love you. But if that's a known thing in recent years in your life, you can't be considered for elder though you can be loved and forgiven and welcomed in the church family. Are you with me, church? We're all committed to these standards of godliness but qualifications for elder must be enforced.

So God has called all of us to be holy like him and his men in leadership must maintain a high standard for the sake of the example before the church. Now this is a passage of Scripture that many many great scholars and pastors and commentary writers have, ah, exegeted and taught on, and it really outlines itself so simply that I'll just use sort of the common outline that's always been used.

Notice, I., and this will cover our session for this morning: the elder must be blameless or above reproach in his moral character. In his moral character. He must be sexually pure. I, I remember four decades ago when I was converted and beginning to start in the ministry that it was unheard of for a man to have a scandalous moral failure in his life and ever again be a pastor or a preaching pastor in a church, and over these four decades it's become more and more common to hear about men, some on their second or third wife who are allowed to be preaching in the pulpit of a local church, and, and we call it accommodating, we call it loving, we call it compassion. We say, "Well, he can relate." Well, I'm sorry, there is forgiveness for that dear brother, there is restoration to church, but in those kinds of moral public scandal there should not be a restoration to the sacred office of preaching the word of God.

Sexually pure. Notice how what he says here, well, he says he must be the husband of one wife. So sexual fidelity is first listed as the moral qualification for the office of elder, and perhaps this is because it seems that this disqualifies more men than anything else, or perhaps also we always understand Scripture in its original cultural context and that is that sexual promiscuity was rampant in the Greek and Roman culture of this day and the city of Ephesus it was rampant in particular. They had the temple of Diana there and thousands of, ah, prostitutes served in the "worship" of Diana there in that temple. So fornication and sexual immoralities was as common as jaywalking. So that's the culture

and so Paul says but once a man becomes a Christian, and that's, he's repented of that and that's in his past, he comes into the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, if that's marked his reputation for very long, he cannot be considered an elder or as an elder in the church.

Now this phrase in the New American Standard, he must be a, the husband of one wife, literally means he must be known as a one-woman man. Did you hear that? That's what it means. It's not the word for divorce. Paul could have easily used that word. He doesn't use that word. It's common in the Greek New Testament. But he uses a word that literally means he's known or he has a reputation as a one-woman man.

Now it's kind of difficult to know all the application here, so I'm gonna run through quickly what different scholars have said this is referred to. Now early scholars said it just prohibited polygamy. A man could not have more than one wife at a time. Why any man would want more than one wife at a time, I don't know. But, um, I don't think that's all he's saying here. For example, polygamy was already prohibited in Jewish law and so it wasn't a major issue among the Jews when this was written, and then among the Greeks and Romans, of course, Paul's writing to Timothy who's functioning as pastor of the local church in Ephesus, it, it, it was, it was an issue but, um, not so much because Roman and Greek men were well-known to have their concubines and their lovers and a wife. They didn't need to get another wife. There, there, there was such a, a corrupt and ungodly view of, of, ah, relationships that men just had all kinds of companions in this setting. Matter of fact, some historians note that in some early Greek/Roman cities many of the men had been married 26 and 27 times. He just got him a new sex partner every year is what he did.

So that's the, the, the, the low level of promiscuity and, by the way, the liberals are trying to get us there real quick. There's every push in the world to throw the, the principles of morality revealed in Scripture and we can all do whatever we feel and whatever we think. As I've said before, whatever degrading passion floats across the fallen depraved mind of man, we're supposed to be able to indulge in it and the rest of us have to celebrate or we're persecuted. That's just the level of wickedness in today's culture but it was that bad or worse in this culture. So while it perhaps, it, it definitely does include no polygamy, it means more than that.

A second thought is that it means elders can't marry a second time and what I mean by this is some early interpreters said it means an elder can never be married a second time even if his former wife died. I don't agree with that. Um, for example, Paul clearly gives permission for remarriage after the death of the spouse, 1 Timothy 5; Romans 7, 1 Corinthians 7. So I don't think he would contradict himself so clearly and say all of a sudden now if a man is ever remarried a second time for any reason he cannot qualify as an elder. The early, ah, commentary writers or the early pastors in particular, held this belief because they said if a man marries again, he's being selfish and indulgent. Well, I just don't believe that holds up biblically. I respect them but I don't agree with it.

Ah, a third interpretation is an elder can never be divorced. Now I'd say again just to be honest with the text, the Greek word here is not divorce. It's just not there. The Greek

word here means he's known as a one-woman man. So, and again, promiscuity was so epidemic in this day, many men could maintain one wife but they had many lovers. So he could say, "I qualify. I can be an elder. I've only had one wife, never been divorced." Well, yeah, but you're known as a womanizer all over town so you don't have the reputation of a one-woman man. And early in my Christian, in my ministry as a pastor as a young man, I, I kind of knew something about some of the churches of Southern Middle Tennessee that I preached in, and I know something about some of the men in those churches, and I would go to those churches and find out that man was a deacon in that church and he was a rascal morally, sinfully, yet he stayed in the church because his wife never left him, stayed on, on the, on the deacon roll because his wife never left him. So you understand that it's got to mean more than he just can't be divorced.

So one of the thoughts that comes to my mind, um, one of the most immoral cities in the land was Corinth and it's likely, let me change that, it's very probable scholars say that all the men in that church of any age had been divorced before because that was just their custom; that's how they lived life. So if you'd hold to that too tenaciously you may never have an elder in the church at Corinth, at least for many many years. So there is a, a, a, it relates, um, to the setting to some degree and I think that's the wisdom of the word of God to give a type of a teaching that would apply in all kinds of settings.

Now let me say this very clearly: while it is possible to allow a divorced man on the body of elders, our conviction has been since I've been here that it is highly improbable and our policy is that a man who has been divorced cannot serve in the office of elder. We just think that's wise and we just think that's best.

A fourth idea here is that an elder can't be single. It says he's got to be a, a, how does he word it here in the original? He has to be the husband of one wife. So there are those who say, well, that means a man can't be single. Well, Paul was single. I don't think the Apostle Paul could possibly say that when he, himself, was a single man.

Now the fifth interpretation is the one that I hold to and this is Dr. John MacArthur's position, I may have originally learned it from him, that is that an elder has a long-standing, unquestioned reputation that he is a one-woman man. Long-standing, unquestioned reputation he is a one-woman man. So again, the phrase here does not refer to marital status, that's not a qualification necessarily for spiritual leadership, however, if he is married, he's to be known as a one-woman man.

So sexual purity is required of the office of elder. Now, secondly, not only sexual purity but not, not excessive. He's not to be excessive in his, um, ah, lifestyle, his character is above that. The word here in our Bible is he must be temperate and that's what that word means. Temperate has the idea of being without wine or unmixed with wine. So it speaks of sobriety which is the opposite of intoxication.

Now so there's two basic ideas here. First of all, the most literal idea is he's not known as a drinker; he's not one that's known as indulging in that. He abstains from any form of intoxication. Drunkenness, again, along with sexual promiscuity, was a form of worship

in the pagan religions that, ah, dominated the city of Ephesus. So notice the radical transformation of these people coming out of this culture from living in open fornications and immoralities to living in open drunkenness, they come into the church and, ah, you can understand that a lot of that came with them. Because you get saved and repent doesn't mean you quit sinning immediately, but at least for the office of elder, these things should have been left behind.

So anyway, drinking was a serious problem in Ephesus. Now we do know that, ah, if you'll study weightily, the word "wine" or "strong drink" in the Old Testament and in through the New Testament, the common practice and encouragement was this: you should mix the wine down with water so that it has it at the least intoxicating element possible, and actually if you take what the Bible calls strong drink, it's not anywhere near as strong as what we would call liquor or bourbon or vodka or whatever it might be, it would be more, much more akin to our regular wine today. What we do with, ah, alcoholic beverages today to give them the most intoxicating potency possible is right the opposite of what we see in the Old and New Testaments as they had to drink some wine because their water was impure but they did all they could to keep the purification of the alcohol there but avoid intoxications.

The Bible says in Proverbs 20:1, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, And whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise." Now the converse of that, if you're intoxicated by it, you'll probably act the fool. I'm known that when I go into a restaurant and they'll come out and say, "Can we get you a cocktail? Can we get you some wine? Can we get you a mixed drink?" And I'll sometimes say, "Do you know what the Bible says about that?" And they'll just look at me funny. I say, "The Bible says that if you drink that stuff, it, you're likely to act like a fool and I'm foolish enough already." And both of those are true. I don't, do you need any help acting like a fool? Now be careful, I've known some of you 40 years. No, you don't need any help. So just be a single fool, not a double fool by going around intoxicated. Second, if you go around intoxicated, you're gonna get a visit from some of us.

Proverbs 23, look at verse 29. Proverbs 23:29, "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." In other words, they're not just using it because it's the, the only pure drink they have, they're using it to get intoxicated. That's why I abhor the idea of social drinking, you're doing it to the end of getting a buzz. We are to have a buzz, it's a holy buzz, it's called the Holy Spirit. That's why the Bible says, "Do not get drunk with wine, that's dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit," in the same context. I've got a great buzz called the Holy Spirit.

Verse 30, "Those who linger long over wine and those who taste mixed wine," this is the idea of mixing it to have more intoxicating nature, verse 31, "Do not look on the wine when it is red," again that, that would reveal, ah, again a more intoxicating drink than maybe it otherwise could be, "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 didn't even know it. Then I shall awake? I will seek another drink." The point is no man who's used alcohol as part of his social culture and enjoys the effects of intoxication has any business in the office of pastor in the church. And I want to tell you, this has become a rampant thing to promote drinking of alcoholic beverages in some churches. I honestly had no concept in my mind when I started the ministry that these type things would be promoted in God's church. I don't know how they get around these texts. They say, "Well, we drink in moderation." Well, moderately intoxicated is not allowable,

Now let me say something in balance here. There's a lot of people who use some kind of sleep aid to help them go to sleep at night. That's why I jokingly say Baptist wine is called Ny-Quil. Come on. Come on. Now if your doctor tells you you need something to help you sleep at night, first of all, I don't want to know. The elders don't want to know and you don't need to promote it, but I don't know why that would be different than whatever these sleep aids that, ah, that they give you over-the-counter. There is a place for that and we're not about legalistic, ah, hardness, but that's a far far far difference than a public lifestyle of using intoxicants in your social gatherings.

And let's be reminded that even though they did use wine in biblical days, in certain Jewish categories of leadership, it was forbidden. For example, the priest could not enter God's house while under any influence of wine. Kings were advised in Proverbs 31 not to drink wine because they could, it could cloud their clear judgment. And the Nazarite vow was the high vow of spiritual commitment and I think the Nazarite vow is a type of New Testament Christianity. The Nazarite vow had a high spiritual commitment in the Old Testament and it forbid even if the water was unclean, it forbid the drinking of any wine. So I've tried to be cautiously biblically balanced here but you see the weight is heavy and, and, and I might say, let me, I... I'm not gonna go there.

Number 2. That's the literal sense and I think the literal sense is part of what Paul is telling Timothy, he must be one who's not excessive. He must be one who is temperate. Then, then the figurative sense and that means overall in his life he's alert and he's watchful. He's a man who must deny any excess, at least as a pattern, that would diminish clear thinking and sound judgment and that's the primary understanding whether it be alcohol or a dozen different things. You can get so indulgent in your hobby you lose, ah, a perspective of what's right and what's wrong and what's proper and what's improper. So it's a, it's a, it's a sense of non-excessiveness.

Let me read you this quote. I do not even remember where I found it. Such a person lives deeply. His pleasures are not primarily those of the sense but those of the soul. He's filled with spiritual and moral earnestness. He's not given to excess but is moderate, well balanced, calm, careful, steady and sane. This pertains to his physical, moral and mental taste and habits.

3. Sexually pure, avoids excess, number 3, self-discipline. The Bible word in verse 2 here is the word "prudent" and that's what it means, prudent means self-discipline. It simply

means to discipline or have self-control. Now the results, it, it, it is the result rather of being temperate and avoiding excess and the man who is, is not extreme, who avoids excess, is on the other hand naturally orderly and disciplined in his life. He knows how to order his priorities.

Now let me, let me go back to what I did this past week in those many hours of teaching those men, ah, those pastors about a biblical priority to their ministry, a biblical order to what matters biblically in putting your enemies there, ah, enemies, putting your energies there and saying no to secondary things. That's all about structurally and orderly carrying on church life and the point is if a man has disorder in his personal life, he's likely gonna have disorder in the church life he oversees and that is a glaring need today among pastors is to be more orderly about the things that matter and the things that don't in church life. The word "propriety" comes to mind. Ah, he knows what is a spiritually and biblically speaking, what's a 9 on a scale of 1-10 and what's a 2 on the scale of 1-10. Far too often pastors make 2s 9s and 9s 2s as far as how the Scripture emphasizes things.

So this person is disciplined. This includes that he is serious about spiritual things. In other words, he doesn't have the reputation of being a clown. It doesn't mean he avoids humor but he knows what things are sacred and what things are dignified and what things are holy and what things are humorous. He has a sure and steady mind, not rash, but thoughtful, earnest and cautious in the judgments he makes.

4. Well organized or respectable. Now this bleeds over into the early word but the word here in our, in our Bible in the New American Standard is "respectable." Respectable. It means he has a good, good behavior and he appreciates all the aspects of his life in a systematic and orderly manner. The opposite of this would be chaos. The idea is, is an elder cannot have an obviously chaotic lifestyle. That doesn't speak well of his ability to oversee and lead the church. The ministry is no place for a man whose life is a continual confusion of unaccomplished plans and unorganized activities.

So overall, now again let me say two things to you. 1. Examine yourself as you examine the church elders. Secondly, understand we're not talking about perfection because if so, then we all must resign. But as a pattern, these things don't stick. They're not, we're not, there's a blamelessness as to pattern.

Then the phrase give to hospitality. He must be given to hospitality. Now we've gotta be real careful on this one because, ah, some of the most hospitable people in the world are people who don't know God. It's just who they are. They just are naturally like this. It's not talking about the guy's an elder if his family has the best dinner parties at his house. That's not what's talking, what he's talking about here at all. Matter of fact, the word here literally means to love strangers. It doesn't mean he's a social butterfly. Matter of fact, that would be detrimental to the ministry, and I'll talk about more in a moment. It doesn't mean he's a skilled politician in how he works the crowd and disciplines the people in his church, but it's to love strangers and this can make a person vulnerable. It might be even dangerous and God doesn't ask us to discard wisdom as we take people in and welcome

them into our fellowships, even into our homes, and understand that's all they had in this day because they had no church buildings and very little money to do anything else.

The idea here is not that he's talking about the pastor must be super-nice, I hope he is a nice guy, but it's an essential situation because in this day many many Christians were severely suffering under persecution and some of them led almost nomadic lifestyle. They might float into Jerusalem having been persecuted and run out of their former town, and literally they had not food, a, a little clothing and no place to rest. The point is the pastor should be an example of all the church members, when they're suffering an persecuting Christians we welcome them even if we don't know them. We love strangers. And you've shown that so wonderfully through the years as we welcome people from all over into our church and, and into our fellowship here and even into our homes.

So in the early church, ah, persecutions and poverty made for a high number of widows and orphans. They had not the, the social government social programs we have today, and so it was necessary not to allow people who are actually really suffering. Now, again, the concept of suffering today means you only have two flat screen televisions and everybody else has three. That's not what this is about. This is literally suffering. This is literally no place to sleep. This is literally nothing to eat. That's the context here and a, a man shouldn't be a pastor in that context who doesn't have a heart to help those brothers and sisters who find themselves in real need.

Now there's a balancing context here and that, that, that helps us understand and that's act, Acts 6. Ah, you understand that this is referring primarily to very small household churches. Matter of fact, if you go through the New Testament, churches meeting in households is about all you find. That means they were very small, about like our small groups almost. But in the early chapters of Acts, there was a tremendous revival, thousands of people were saved, and there was a great number of widows who were not, ah, being served the hospitality they needed, they were not being said, fed rather in the daily distribution of the food, and in that case, the pastors organized the large church so that those needs would be met, well, they said we will go study and prepare to preach. So the context dictates how this is to be carried out but I think the thing is the pastor's heart must be one that he is approachable, he's not isolated from the people. All of our elders, those of us on staff, those of us who are not staff members, will gladly meet with someone, gladly receive people, and that's the heart we must have. I have office hours every week, ah, for folks who want to come in with any counseling need they may have. So there's a sense in which he can't be aloof and separate from the people.

Now balance is very important here and here's what I want to say here: this of all the traits may be the easiest one for Satan to get a foothold in the church through and the easiest one for Satan to counterfeit. I have seen this over and over and over and over and over again where perhaps with good intentions and good motives, a pastor's gifted with people skills, he has charisma, he knows how to make people laugh, he knows how to be everybody's buddy, and he begins to realize he can keep a following on that instead of on this. So he's hospitable but he's way out of balance and even becomes sinful. And I, I, I can't tell you how often I, I run into it constantly in my training pastors because the most

hospitable and loving thing a pastor can do is do what Paul also commanded to Timothy, that is to study to the point of exhaustion in preaching the word to your people. You can't be a social butterfly and do what Paul commands Timothy to do in handling the word of God.

But it is a subtle, and I mean good brothers who I know are good men get trapped in this trap. All it takes is two or three people to say, "He's not caring enough. He's not available enough. He's not there when I need him." But let me, you know I thought about this earlier. We have, ah, 800-900 active people, not all those are members but we have 800-900 active people in this church. If I could make every one of you feel like you're my best buddy, what would that be doing? It'd be a lie and you know it and I know it. There's just not enough time or energy for me or Matt or Brother Steve or any of our elders to tell everybody, "We're your best buddy." No, we want to be hospitable as much as we can but there's got to be an order and a structure in a large congregation for this to function and our small groups is a wonderful biblical way to organize that kind of caring and that kind of hospitality.

Well, we come to the last one. I'm gonna go ahead and throw this one in. I was gonna do this tonight but I'm gonna, I'm gonna build on it this morning: able to teach. He must be able to teach. Now it doesn't mean he's called to be a heralding pulpit preacher. You wouldn't expect God would give us 12 men with a strong gift to preach, there's just not enough pulpit for that, and it's been proven throughout history that, um, in, in, in the church, first century, the church age and churches throughout the ages, that typically among a body of elders God raises up a lead or preaching pastor. We see that with Paul among the, the Gentiles. We see it with Peter among the Jews, and we see it all throughout church history. So we hold to the principle and I'll elaborate on this later in the study, that there's a body of elders and when we meet, we are all equal but based on gifts and calling there is a leader among equals. Another thing that you wouldn't expect and it would certainly lead to chaos and confrontation, is that all 12 elders all have the same strong gift of leadership. Well, that would be a harmonious group, would it not? No, some have the gift of leading, some don't have that gift so much but they all must be able to teach.

And quickly going through these, first of all, he must have credibility, and that is he, he counsels or he teaches and that's one way he teaches, by the way, an elder may just be a very good personal counselor and I can say this unequivocally, all of our men are very able to take the word of God and exhort and guide and teach in private settings. But he has to be skilled and practice what he preaches and we don't want to be a, a church that reverts to elders only teach historical or intellectual facts. It's the ability to bring the word of God down to application to our lives. That speaks to our credibility. In 1 Timothy 4:12 Paul told Timothy, "Show yourself an example of those who believe. Be credible."

Now let's go to the next thing, not only credibility under the gift of teaching or able to teach, he has the gift of teaching. It's hard to put your finger on this but it's obvious when you sit under a person and they know how to take the biblical truth and apply it to life. Now I think there are ladies who have this gift but obviously ladies don't hold the office

of elder. And to varying degrees this gift is scattered throughout a congregation but for a man to be considered for the office of elder, he needs to have shown at least in his personal counseling in small groups or from pulpit ministry are all of the above that he has a God-given gift of teaching.

Secondly, he must be doctrinally sound. Ah, this is something that should take a while. You know, if, if we have a new staff member join our staff, um, especially from outside of our church, our policy is to require three years before he could be considered for the office of elder and part of that is because he needs to learn both sound doctrine and how we function in sound doctrine here at Grace Life Church.

We know that Timothy was a, a young man and Paul commends Timothy because his, ah, his mother and his grandmother had taken the pains to thoroughly teach him the doctrines of Scripture. So as he's converted and called into the ministry, he already had a reservoir of doctrinal understanding. Now it's changed some today but sadly a lot of young preachers go off to seminary which actually is not in the Bible, I think seminaries are good but there's no biblical requirement for graduate schools of theology. I don't know why we ever thought we could have an educational system structured after the pagan Greeks of antiquity and it's the best way to train men for ministry because it's not the best way. The best way is the local church with some formal training thrown in there. But anyway, young men go off to seminaries and many of our seminaries, and I'm not talking about just Baptist but many of our Evangelical seminaries have lost the faith. They teach them heresy. They teach them unsound doctrine, and so God-forbid this church every put, ever put a man in this pulpit or even on the elder body who, um, has been trained in liberal or unsound theology or doctrine, and ah, at least has not recanted and turned from that and shown good evidence.

A fourth thing under able to teach, he must be humble. He must be humble. I'm talking about biblical humility here, not a worldly concept of humility. Jesus was wonderfully meek and mild one day, the next day he may publicly boldly and with manly courage be condemning and calling out a, a, a hypocritical Pharisee, or he may pick up a cat-o-nine tails and literally physically run men out of the temple, the money-changers. Both of those are humility. "Pastor, how are both of those humility?" Because in both cases he humbled himself to do what his Father wanted done, not what he wanted done. That's humility. It also parallels over to meekness. But here's what I'm talking about, the man who teaches must also be the man who says, "I'm repenting too. I'm learning too. I'm growing also." Without that quality, he's not yet ready for the office of pastor. An overt and obvious pattern of arrogance cannot be present in a man who is teaching correctly or is qualified under the qualification of being able to teach.

He leads a holy life. That's the next qualification. It means his, his, his life must have a holiness. Certainly not perfection but it's obvious in his lifestyle, the way he raises his children, the way he handles his recreation, or whatever it may be, he seeks a holiness and a righteousness in his lifestyle, again so that there's no contradiction between his preaching and the way he lives.

He's diligent in Bible study. Diligent in Bible study. Ah, we'll look at this more as we go through the, ah, pastoral epistles, but Paul commands Timothy, he uses a Greek phrase that literally means this: be up to your ears in study and in preparation for preaching. Be up to your ears, literally means labor to the point of exhaustion in your study and in your preaching.

You have allowed me to do that here and I believe without exception you would say it's led to the spiritual benefit of the whole church. I don't just thank you for that for me, I thank you for that for you. God-forbid you get some happy jack, slappy on the back, everybody's buddy, warm, winsome, wonderful personality and great humor kind of guy who doesn't feed you the word of God. Now you're discerning enough to know the difference. You would see through that guy quickly. Most churches don't. You know why? Most churches aren't spiritual, they want the carnal affections of a manipulative pastor, not the spiritual truths of a faithful pastor. So I commend you for that maturity.

Lastly, he must be a man with courage and conviction. Um, I hate to even go here. Well, if I hate to go there, I shouldn't go there, even though I'm functioning on lots of jet-lag right now. One of the great missing elements in leadership of countries and pulpits is a lack of manly courage. Look at Jesus, not this liberal, ah, redesigned Jesus that we hear from the news commentators or somebody will throw out some quote about what would Jesus do. They, they don't know who in the world Jesus is. I'm telling you, Jesus not only did he grow up as a carpenter's son, not only did he grow up carrying heavy beams and working hard and had callused hands, he was a man's man physically but he was a man's man in moral courage. You don't stand up to the Pharisees who had the power of life and death and point your finger in their face and say, "You know what you guys are? You're a bunch of snakes." Jesus said that, "You're a brood of vipers. You're a white-washed tomb," one of the most insulting indignities you could ever say to a Jew is that you're like a dead body because dead bodies were spiritually and morally unclean to them. Jesus had manly courage and I don't want to sit under any man who opens this book and doesn't have the courage to preach, "Thus saith the Scriptures."

On the one hand a humility, a repentance, on the other hand a courage and a boldness. That's all included. Now he may not be an elder who, who uses the pulpit but if he's counseling or teaching, he's gonna love and but firmly say, "Here's what the Scripture says. Your problem is not this, your problem is not that, your problem's not your wife, and your problem's not your work environment, your problem is you." A manly courage.

Well, I feel like I always feel. I resign. I don't mean that obviously. You may fire me but for those of us who hold the office of elder, may we be strongly reprov'd, may we be of thorough self-examination, and may we say, "O God in heaven, if You don't keep me, I won't be kept." If all of you in the congregation examine your lives also, "Lord, am I this kind of man? Lord, am I this kind of woman?" Because these aren't just the qualification for elder, these are qualifications for Christians but a man can't be in the office of elder if he has glaring patterns of character deficiencies in these areas.