

Qualifications of a Church Officer

Compiled by Patrick Ramsey

I. Personal life.

- A. Temperate; 1 Tim. 3:2, 8; Titus 1:7.
 - 1. Greek can mean: sober, not intoxicated, clear headed, self-controlled, moderate, frugal, continent, sober-minded, prudent, reasonable.
 - 2. Word in this context means to be on guard, vigilant, alert, clear-headed. Spiritually active and awake. KJV: "Vigilant."
- B. Sober-minded; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8.
 - 1. The Greek can mean: prudent, thoughtful, self-controlled.
 - 2. Refers to wisdom, good sense, a sound mind, good judgment.
- C. Respectable or "of good behavior"; 1 Tim. 3:2; 3:8.*
 - 1. Better translated "respectable."
 - 2. Officers need to be men worthy of respect. They need to be honorable men.
- D. Not given to wine; 1 Tim. 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7.*
 - 1. Does not mean that an elder cannot drink.
 - 2. Alcohol or any other substance must not control an officer.
- E. Not greedy for money; 1 Tim. 3:3.*
 - 1. Must not be in the ministry for the money, fame, power, control, authority, prestige, respect, flattery, etc.
 - 2. Must not be seeking dishonest gain in any sphere of his life.
- F. A Christian man of conviction and principle; 1 Tim. 3:9; Titus 1:9.*
 - 1. "Mystery of the faith": revealed truths of the Christian faith as found in Scripture.
 - 2. Hold or preserve or keep. Titus = "cling to, hold fast to, be devoted to."
- G. Not self-willed; Titus 1:7.
 - 1. Compound word: self and to delight in. Hence a self-loving, self-willed, arrogant spirit.
 - 2. Must be humble, willing to yield. Note James 3:17.
- H. Holy; Titus 1:8.
 - 1. Set apart.
 - 2. Pure; note 2 Tim. 2:21. M'Cheyne: "In great measure, according to the purity and perfection of the instrument will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God."
 - 3. Knight: "used here of a one who is 'devout, pious, pleasing to God.' "
- I. Just; Titus 1:8.
 - 1. Must be righteous and just. Must keep God's law.
 - 2. Must not be given to favoritism. Not partial.
- J. A lover of the good; Titus 1:8.

1. Note Phil. 4:8.
 2. Knight: "An overseer's love for people is always to be corrected with a love for what God wants people to be."
- K. Self-controlled/disciplined; Titus 1:8.
1. Note 1 Cor. 9:24-27.
 2. Need to be able to curb excesses and sinful habits.

II. **Inter-personal life.**

- A. Not violent or quick-tempered; 1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7.
1. Must be able to control your emotions and body.
 2. One who engages in fights (other than self-defence) or is physically abusive is not fit to be an officer.
 3. Must not be quick-tempered. An elder must be able to control his tongue as well; James 1:19-20; Prov. 14:17; 16:32.
- B. Not quarrelsome; 1 Tim. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:24.
1. Term means: not given to disputes or quarrels or strife.
 2. Must not be contentious or argumentative. This is different from debate or arguing.
 3. Cf. 2 Tim. 2:23-24; Titus 3:9-11; James 4:1-2
 4. Calvin: "[An overseer must be a man] who knows how to bear injuries peacefully and with moderation, who excuses much, who swallows insults, who does not make himself dreaded for his harsh severity, nor rigorously exact all that is due to him. The man who is not contentious is he who avoids disputes and quarrels...."
- C. Gentle; 1 Tim. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:24.
1. Means: gentle, yielding, kind.
 2. A quality that all should have; Titus 3:1-2; Phil. 4:5.
 3. Need to be gentle with those who are harsh; 1 Pet. 2:18.
 4. Need to be able to overlook sin and transgression.
 5. Need to be forbearing and patient with others.
 6. Need to exemplify this quality in times of criticism, disagreements and controversy.
- D. Not double-tongued; 1 Tim. 3:8.*
1. Vincent: "Saying one thing and meaning another, and making different representations to different people about the same thing."
 2. Must be one who tells the truth and who does not contradict himself.
 3. Cf. 2 Cor. 1:17-18.

III. **Family life.**

- A. Husband of one wife; 1 Tim. 3:2; 3:9; Titus 1:6.*
1. Does not mean you have to be married to be an elder.
 2. Does not necessarily mean that a divorced and/or remarried man cannot serve as an officer.
 3. A polygamist cannot be an officer in the church.
 4. Men who are unfaithful or unchaste cannot serve as officers.
 5. Men who have not biblically resolved an unbiblical divorce cannot be an officer.

6. Men who do not love their wives as they ought should not serve as an officer.
- B. Manages his household well; 1 Tim. 3:4; 3:12.*
1. A man must be the ruler or manager of his home, not the wife.
 2. The man must be able to manage well. Indicators of ruling well are the last two family qualifications.
- C. Obedient children; 1 Tim. 3:4-5; 3:12; Titus 1:6.*
1. Does not mean you have to have children or more than one child to be an officer.
 2. “Children” refers to those who are still living in the home under the father’s authority.
 3. Titus 1:6 = “faithful” or “believing.”
 - a. Greek word can mean either.
 - b. Context indicates “faithful” is the correct translation. For the term is qualified in the second part of the verse. Cf. 1 Tim. 3:4-5.
 4. Children need to be under control of the father. They ought to be obedient and submissive.
 5. Knight on Titus 1:6b: “Therefore the potential elder’s children must not be guilty of “sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties” (1 Pet. 4:3).”
- D. Wives must be reverent and not given to gossip; 1 Tim. 3:11 .*
1. Committed to their husbands.
 2. Godly. Able to control their tongues and attitudes.
 3. Wives can often play a very helpful, active supportive role to their husbands in the diaconate work.

IV. **Gifts.**

- A. Hospitable; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8.
1. Compound word: “a friend or one who loves” and “a host.”
 2. An elder must be one who loves to host.
 3. Required by all Christians; 1 Peter 4:8; Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2.
 4. We are to share our gifts and resources with one another. We are to be kind, friendly, gracious, loving, helping where we can, etc.
- B. Able to teach; 1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:24; Titus 1:8.
1. Is this requirement for Ruling Elders as well? Yes.
 2. Distinguish between preaching and teaching.
 3. Do not necessarily need gifts of public speaking and of preaching but must be able to, as L. Eyres says, “deal with people on a one-to-one basis, applying the Word to the needs of the individual.”
- C. Able to exhort and refute; Titus 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:25.
1. Need to have a good knowledge of Scripture.
 2. Need to be bold.
 3. Need to be skillful in being able to discern error and explain truth.
 4. Need to have ability to apply the Word of God.

V. **Experience.**

- A. Not a recent convert; 1 Tim. 3:6.

1. Lit. “newly planted.”
 2. A new convert will easily be puffed up with pride if he is made an officer. Pride blinds one from the truth and God opposes the proud even as He opposed the devil.
 3. Age is not necessarily a factor. An old new Christian should not be an officer.
 4. Outstanding abilities and gifts and learning are not sufficient to qualify a new convert for the ministry.
- B. Tested; 1 Tim. 3:10.*
1. See 1 Tim. 5:22, 24-25.
 2. Need a chance to see if men meet the qualifications of office.
 3. Hence, officer training class and examinations by the session and also the church as they consider who they ought to elect to office.

VI. Reputation.

- A. A good reputation with those outside of the church; 1 Tim. 3:7.
1. A man will often spend much time with unbelievers. Moreover, a man will be more of himself before unbelievers. He will not put on a show as some do at church.
 2. An officer must not be a hypocrite.
 3. Distinguish between the reproach of Christ and the reproach of the devil, suffering for doing good and suffering for doing evil.
- B. Blameless; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6.*
1. Does not mean sinless or perfection.
 2. An officer must be a man of Christian character and integrity. Note Job 1:1.
 3. Must be a man who lives a godly and consistent life.
 4. Must be a man who is not living in sin. Note: habitual sin, refusal to change, etc.
 5. What about extraordinary sins? Do they forever disqualify a man from holding office?

*Qualifications for deacons