

Fact Sheet for **“15 Qualities”**

1 Timothy 3:1-7 B

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^{3:1} ¶ **The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.**
² **Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,** ³ **not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.** ⁴ **He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive,** ⁵ **for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?** ⁶ **He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.** ⁷ **Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.**

As we come to this passage today we have seen in the past couple of weeks that these verses are about the character qualities that an Elder/ Overseer/Pastor should have. We have also seen that this office is gender-specific, open to males only. Today we are going to take a closer look at the 15 character qualities listed here. But I first want to make this point. These are not only for the men who would aspire to this office. They are also qualities that every Christian should hold in high regard, for those who would serve in this way and also for themselves where appropriate.

1 Above reproach

blameless, irreprehensible, irreproachable

2 The husband of one wife

This is literally a “one woman man”. This very clearly refers to a husband’s life-long commitment to his wife, and to her alone. When speaking of righteous widows in chapter five the Apostle Paul would use the literal reciprocal term “one man woman” (1 Timothy 5:9). Again, this clearly refers to a wife’s life-long commitment to her husband, and to him alone. This was God’s perfect design for marriage before sin ever entered the world. Divorce has never been a part of that perfect design. But sin spread to all, and with it came death.

^{ESV} **Romans 5:12** ¶ Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned--

And with sin and death came all the questions about what this character trait means. Many understand this quality to indicate that the men who fill this office can never have been divorced. Others would extend this to mean that he must be married, or that he not be a widower. The policy of our church is to never nominate a divorced man to be an elder. But being a “one woman man” is so much deeper than never having been divorced. It goes to a man’s heart commitment to his wife, and this is seen in his character.

3 Sober-minded – clearheaded

4 Self-controlled – Sensible, prudent, thoughtful

5 Respectable – Decent, honorable

6 Hospitable – Kind to strangers or visitors

7 Able to teach – Competent to teach, formally of informally

8 Not a drunkard – *Just like it says*

9 Not violent – Not quarrelsome, not a bully

10 Gentle – courteous, kind, tolerant (*not of sin*)

11 Not quarrelsome – Not contentious, peaceable

12 Not a lover of money – Not greedy, but generous

13 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ **for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?**

“Submissive” does not mean that the children are beaten down but that they show proper obedience and respect to their parents.

14 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.

15 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

Now we come to a few other observations on this passage.

1 These Are Not All the Traits

Paul in Titus 1:5-9 also lists qualifications for this office. Though both the Timothy and Titus passages describe several of the same qualities, they both include traits that the other does not. This is a good indicator that neither list is exhaustive, and perhaps both lists together are not exhaustive. Each of these character qualities is certainly important. However these lists should best be understood as describing the type of man that a church may elevate to this office.

2 We Are Not Perfect

^{ESV} **Matthew 5:48** You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

And Jesus there meant squeaky-clean perfect, going far beyond the letter of the Law. The Apostle John describes God this way.

^{ESV} **1 John 1:5** ¶ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

Is it right to demand this kind of squeaky-clean sinless perfection from our elders? If there is just once when we do something that others don't think well of (verse 15), even if we were right, do we disqualify our self from this office? Obviously this is not what Paul meant. These traits should be the exceedingly strong swing of our characters. But when we fail we should always make short work of it.

^{ESV} **1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

3 Overseers Are the Primary Leaders

The qualifications for Deacons in verses 8-10, 12-13 include only 6 of the 15 qualities listed for Overseers in verses 1-7. Their list also includes one trait from Titus 1:5-9 and two traits that are from neither 1 Timothy 3:1-7 nor from Titus 1:5-9. But overall the list of necessary character traits for Deacons is only about half as long as that for Elders/Overseers/Pastors. This shows that the office of Overseer is a higher office in the church than that of Deacon.

The demands and specifics of being “above reproach” are changing and getting more specific all the time. *Here is an illustration from May 23rd of this year: <https://albertmohler.com/2018/05/23/wrath-god-poured-humiliation-southern-baptist-convention>.*

Both I and the other elders are making moves to meet these increasing demands of being above reproach. We are doing this to be good and proper examples to this congregation and to the world. We take the character qualities listed here very seriously and seek to do our best before God. We invite you to pray for us as we do.