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# Qualities of a biblical leader

## 1Timothy 3:1-7

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Tonight I will be speaking on qualities of a biblical leader. These qualities will be taken from 1Timothy 3:1-7 as we look at the qualifications for overseers. However, for our purpose tonight we will be viewing these qualities as they are to exist in the home. Please open your Bibles to this passage (1Timothy 3:1-7). But before we read and expound this paragraph a question must be asked. Why am I preaching this sermon? That obvious question draws many insufficient answers – like when the clock strikes 6:30pm on Sunday the preacher preaches or Pastor Russ asked me to preach this message in the series. These answers to the question of why preach this passage are not wrong but they just don't go far enough. We need to start this message off by starting with its definite purpose.

Why I am preaching this sermon is precisely because:

1. *I am a pastor* – I love Clearcreek Chapel. I long to be used of God with the other elders to care for this church like this passage talks about. THEREFORE I preach this message so that each of you will have confidence in God that he has you in a biblical local church with biblical leadership necessary to care for you in a way that guides you under the Word to receive much grace leading to your transformation that reflects these qualities seen in this passage.
2. *I am a husband* – I love Lisa. I long to be used of God to care for you like this passage talks about. THEREFORE, I preach this message so that you sweetheart will be under the Word and receive much grace leading to your transformation that reflects these qualities seen in this passage.
3. *I am a father* – I love Brittany, Joel, Seth and Kara. I long to be used of God to care for each of you as this passage mentions. THEREFORE, I preach this message so that you four will be under the Word and receive much grace leading to your transformation that reflects these qualities seen in this passage.
  - a. *Paraphrase: I preach this passage to my family in order for each of you to be reminded of what God requires of me. When I do not reflect these qualities, I trust this message will come back to you and you will remind me of the standard to which I am to be measured and that you will point me to the Christ for forgiveness and grace needed for repentance and change.*
4. *I am a saint who sins* – I love the Lord Jesus Christ. I long to be renewed by him and his gospel so that I will repent of my sins regularly, enjoy His saving embrace energetically and thus be conformed into His image continually so that I will not bring His church and gospel into disrepute but rather bring many into saving faith so that they can reflect the qualities mentioned in this paragraph.

To braid these four reasons together to form a sturdy purpose for this message here is my aim in a single sentence: This message is ***to give us a profile of maturity that together we will both desire and help each other grow in these qualities leading to a church-wide reputation that captures outsiders by this better vision.*** This is my hope. This is my agenda. And all this is impossible without God working it out. So let's pray.

## Qualities of a biblical leader

To begin the message, listen as I read our passage for tonight.

*[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.*

(1 Timothy 3:1-7 ESV)

### Its Aspiration

**v1**

To understand the qualities of a biblical leader first notice its aspiration in v1. “If anyone aspires to the office of overseer he desires a noble task”. Much can be said concerning the office of eldership from this passage. But for our purposes in this series I want simply to highlight two words in relation to biblical leadership – “Aspire” and “Desire”. In verse one we can see that leadership is ambitious. It comes from the heart. It wants to serve. It longs to give. It is motivated from deep within.

The work of leadership in the church and at home is a work of joy. Men, we are to lead with gladness and not begrudgingly or under compulsion (1 Peter 5:1-3; 2Cor.9:7). We are to seek our joy in the holy joy of others. We are to help people understand the Bible, love the gospel, treasure the Christ and sacrificially serve others. Though demanding and even dangerous at times, we are always to do the work of leadership not with unwilling and half-hearted service. We are to serve with gladness. This is the starting point of the qualities of a biblical leader

### Its Reputation

**v2a,7**

Following this heartbeat of leadership we come to v2 and the phrase “above reproach”. A couple of things I want to point out about this summary quality.

First, the phrase “above reproach” does not merely apply to elders. Certainly, what Paul is telling Timothy concerns people like Chad, Dale, Mark, Russ, Devon, Tim, Steve and me. This text is talking about overseers. But notice 5:7 and how Paul describes widows who qualify for financial support from the church. They are to be “above reproach”. I take this to mean that this phrase we are looking at is shorthand for or a summary of maturity to which all believers strive. Men, women, boys and girls; we who are of God’s household (i.e. Christians) are to rely on grace and readily apply His Word so that we all can have this type of reputation – above reproach.

Second, a similar idea to “above reproach” can be seen at the end of our passage in v7. Here we come to a quality of leadership that is described as “well thought of by outsiders”. What I want us to notice is that these phrases function as bookends of our passage. They are talking about the church’s reputation. As people look on us (both believers [v2] as well as unbelievers [v7]) they do not see obvious character flaws. People who view us are to conclude correctly about the Lord and His gospel. They are not to view us and then say slanderous things about the gospel. In other words, we all are to have a reputation that reflects the character of God and the nature of the gospel. When people look at elders (and broadening it out to apply to each of us) they are to see what we are about to observe in the following verses –v 2-6. This reputation characteristic of the gospel summarizes the following twelve qualifications or qualities to which we now turn our attention.

I’ve taken the liberty to combine these qualities into three main headings.

1. Maturity – what this gospel-upholding reputation looks like
2. Marriage – where this reputation takes place
3. Ministry – where this reputation takes place

First a look at a reputation that upholds the gospel. I’m calling it Maturity.

### **A look at maturity**

Within our passage we see eight characteristics of maturity. I’ve grouped these eight into three subsections for our consideration.

#### ***Time is needed***

The first grouping takes up one quality of maturity.

*Not be a recent convert or he may become puffed up with conceit*

This phrase tells us that Christians need to go through some seasoning to bring forth humility. Pride is not to be present. Maturity and self-importance are opposites. New believers are taken by the hand and led by God through a variety of experiences. These experiences are to teach the recent convert that “man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God”. “Trusting the Lord with all our hearts and leaning not on our own understanding” is created by the Lord over time. Maturity takes time.

#### ***Self-mastery is evident***

The second grouping picks up five qualities of maturity

*Sober-minded, Self-controlled, Respectable, Not a drunkard, Not a lover of money*

A self-mastery as seen in these five qualities will resemble: **Sober-minded** A reasonable, pleasant kind of person. **Self-controlled** A good sense, under control kind of person. **Respectable** A civil and courteous kind of person. **Not a drunkard** and **Not a lover of money** point to well-placed hope and ordered

affections. A free from bondage kind of person (whether the slavery is in a form of substance [drugs, alcohol] or ideas [power, prestige] or activities [risky, easy] ).

In other words, maturity is a Spirit-enabled self-mastery that provides a kind of pleasant, controlled respectability toward others. This evidence of maturity is not a mere mastering of things but of being mastered by God for the benefit of others.

### ***A peace-making bent is unmistakable***

The third grouping assisting us in insight into maturity brings in two qualities

*Not violent but gentle, Not quarrelsome*

These phrases communicate the manner in which biblical leaders are to interact with difficult people. The descriptions are the opposite of the false teachers of the day (see 6:3-5). Leadership is not to brawl with words or fists. A gentleness in the midst of the battle is to be characteristic. He should not be harsh. And leadership should be tough only when love would deem it necessary. His words are not caustic or demeaning. He is not given to sarcasm and belittling. He is gentle. There should be a peace-making bent to this person. He does not carry resentments or is a fault-finding kind of person. He is not easily offended but desires to get close to difficult people in order to assist in reconciliation

Here, using these 8 qualifications/qualities, we have in front of us a composite sketch of maturity – a kind of character to which we all are to aspire .

But strangely there is something missing from this presentation. So far, we have a good definition of maturity. It is defined, delineated and described. But all this dangles in theory. What is missing is the context in which maturity is seen. And this is the subject to which we will turn now.

## **A look at marriage**

*The husband of one wife*

In v.1-7 we see much relationship. We see God. We read about overseers. We notice the church. We hear about households. We see husbands and their wives. We observe children. We read about unbelievers. This paragraph is chock full of relationships. Here's the initial point: Maturity is both framed in and forged out through relationship. You will know your level of maturity by the quality of relationships. Let's look at the first relationship.

The first relationship in which we notice maturity is in marriage. Paul starts his list off with the phrase "the husband of one wife". Now this phrase "the husband of one wife" has been difficult for some to interpret. For some, they say this qualification for leadership means a man mustn't be a polygamist. For others they see no remarriage in any case at any time. I find the third interpretation to be much more exegetically satisfying (see 5:9) and morally demanding.

The phrase literally reads, “one woman husband”. The sense is that he is a “one woman kind of man”. You see a similar construction in 5:9 and how it relates to mature widows. The idea here is not quantity but quality. New Living Translation paraphrases it nicely: “faithful to wife”.

Now let’s roll up our sleeves and begin to look at maturity in particular relationships. I will be addressing the men tonight as leaders of households or future leaders of homes. I want all of us to pay close attention to these applications; for they are God’s word and you all can profit from them. But too, women and children, you will know how to pray for and encourage your husbands/fathers in the process of maturing.

First, concerning our hearts toward our wives.

According to statistics sex scenes on US television nearly doubled between 1998 and 2005. One can only speculate what statistics would say about 2011. In our culture women commonly appear in commercials, movies, on billboards or magazine racks as dazzling and available. Their shameless, seductive face says, “come and get me”. Just recently I went to a nationally known bookstore to look for a particular history book. I went to the information desk to see if they carried this book. And in broad daylight, on the floor was a stack of pornographic magazines that had yet been distributed. The deceptive promise is everywhere we go. Craig Gross in his book “The Dirty Little Secret” says that “the porn industry is larger than Microsoft, Google, EBay, Amazon, Yahoo and Apple *combined!*”

My brothers, do I have your attention. We are called to be captured by a better vision. We are summoned to grow in maturity. We are to be a “one woman kind of man”.

My brothers we must be vigilant in this area. **We must:**

- **Rehearse** the wonderful gospel to our hearts daily that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost”. (1:15).
- **Remember** that Satan has traps all over bated by dazzling and deadly promises (3:7). He uses strong desires to allure us away from Christ and stray after what he offers (5:11,15).
- **Repent** of any activity (whether in the imagination or in real world) that weakens our faith in His Word causing us to conclude that “a one woman kind of man” is second best rather than the best(6:17).
- **Relish** the grace of our Lord overflowing for us in Christ (1:14)
- **Rally** around this call to “fight the good fight of faith” (6:12) with those doing so (4:16)

## **A look at ministry**

The second context in which maturity is seen in this paragraph can be summarized as ministry. The three qualities that point out ministry are:

*Hospitable, Able to teach, Manages his own household well*

Tonight we are looking at qualities of a biblical leader at home. We've said that these qualities in a sense create a composite sketch of maturity. This maturity we said is summarized as a reputation that upholds the gospel. So as we turn to our final point in this message tonight, look with me at ministry in the home.

## **Using one's home to bless others**

First men, our ministry at home is to be:

*Hospitable* - This literally means a lover of strangers (see 5:10 and how it relates to widows; see also Rom12:13; 1Pet.4:9). We are called to be mature men. And maturity will use the home for ministry. Are you noticing changes in this area of your life? Do you have a more open heart for people to come over to your home? Do you see your home as an ideal place to put the gospel on display for others? Inviting people to watch a sporting event with you on your TV, to learn a hobby/trade with you in your workshop or work on a car or play a board game with your family, or simply to invite people to your table and enjoy food and fellowship –these are signs that you are maturing.

*Able to teach* – is the next quality we notice. This qualification is the only one that uniquely applies to elders. Your elders are to have a skill with the word enabling them to discern and deliver and defend the word in an understandable manner. Though this quality is distinctly about elders this does not mean it has no application to each of us in the room tonight. Are you growing as a student of the Word? Are you systematically reading your Bible? Are you participating in Adult Bible Education with an eye toward reproducing your learning at home? Do you talk with your children over what they learn in their classes at the Chapel? Are you praying for discernment in the Word and opportunities to share the Word?

The Word tonight my brothers is calling each of you to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might, to have the Bible “on your heart” in order to “teach it diligently to your children by talking of it with your family as you sit in your house, when you are on an errand run or when you say good night and good morning to your family. (Deut.6:4ff)

This we can and must do brothers as we grow in maturity and thus promote a reputation that upholds the gospel and the character of God.

## **Caring for his family**

*Manages his own household well* – We end the message tonight spotlighting our homes and the children in it. We know we are maturing when we are more involved in our homes.

This qualification found in our passage tonight takes up two verses and is more descriptive than the others. Home life to teach and live out the gospel was very important to the Apostle. Men, I want to draw your attention to a few things about these verses.

Notice that the passage starts with managing and ends with caring. Here we see a managing and caring leadership for the family that is the training ground for doing the same in and for the church. Caring shapes the definition of managing and how he loves his children.

The children in this passage are not perfect by any means. But they are disciplined and do not obviously and regularly disregard the instructions of the parents. Men, we are called tonight to be the loving and responsible spiritual leader in the home. Our wives are tenderly loved. Our relationship with our family should be openly commendable. Our children want to be in this type of home. They may not understand all we are doing but they have a trust in and respect for their parents that they submit to the leadership of the father. We are a manager of our home. This is not the question. The question is, “what is the quality of our management in our homes? How are you actively caring for your wife and children? What does this look like when there are problems to be solved? Hurts that need to be comforted? Misunderstandings that needs to be resolved? Disorder that needs order? Sin that needs to be disciplined? Appliances that need to be serviced? Do you hope that it all just goes away? Do you sedate your anxieties by watching TV and allowing your household to go in disarray? NO, NO, NO! The call tonight is one of maturing. We need each other to grow in these areas. Use this time (the onset of 2011) to say, enough is enough. I will once again be a good manager of my household. I will call upon my elder for counsel and support. I will repent of what I need to turn from and will grow in faith over God’s Word. He will give me what I need to give back to Him what He expects. And what He expects is maturity – a reputation that preserves and promotes the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

## From here To there

Here is my closing counsel to guide each of us in application.

1. Remember the gospel (see 3:16 meditation below)
2. Take one area highlighted tonight and work on it.
3. This work is a community project. Get help.
4. Develop a plan for maturing in this area.
5. Trust Jesus Christ through the process of change.

*[Thoughts on 3:16: the mystery of these Christian qualities (on which we’ve focused this evening) is found not in cracking a code or reading the 21th new book on the secrets to successful living. Rather, Paul says the mystery of godliness is in this confession of v16. This confession starts off with the pronoun “He”. Please do not miss this observation. The mystery of godliness is not in mere principles. It is in the stunning person of Jesus. Jesus Christ is the secret of the Christian life.*

*Christ is the source of the church’s life. Christ is the sustainer of the Church’s life. Christ laid down His life to purchase the church. He is the revelation of what the church is and ought to strive to be. He is the author. He is the accomplisher. He is the original. He is the reason for the church. And as we will see a faith-union with Christ is the only way for us to live the life Paul writes about in his letter.]*