

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT ELDERS AND DEACONS

Don't let the title mislead you. It probably should read, "*Some things the Bible Has To Say About Elders and Deacons*". This is not intended to be the last word on the subject by any means and one would be advised to read some of the excellent literature on the subject that is available in the form of numerous books and articles. And it seems there is always more that can be said. That said, hopefully, what follows will be a fair and helpful overview of some of the important considerations for these two NT leadership offices.

Elders in the Old Testament:

The term '**elder**' is a very common one in the OT. The biblical nation of Israel, not unlike other cultures throughout history, was led by 'the elders'. This is not to ignore the role of the prophet and priest, and later the king. But it needs to be acknowledged that even with the presence of these various men and women of influence whom God rose up to "lead the nation", still it becomes apparent that their role was mediated in practical terms by an established 'elder' tradition.

The references to 'elders' in the OT are too numerous to consider here but here is a sampling: Exodus 3:16,18, 4:29,31; 12:21; 17:5,6 ... Lev 9:1 ; 4:15 ; Numbers 11:16,17 ; 16:25; Deut 5:23; 27:1 ; 29:10 ; 31:9-13 Joshua 7:6; 8:10,33 ; 23:2 ; 24:1 ; 24:31 ...

These passages (and others) show that a system of leadership by elders was well established early in Israel's history. Leadership by a council of elders was likely the common form of government in the tribal traditions of all of our earliest ancestors.

This pattern continues throughout the entire Old Testament. Prophets arose, priests were appointed, Judges ruled the people, and Kings were crowned, but through it all, leadership at the local level has always been the responsibility of a group of elders.

Elders in the New Testament:

When we come to the NT we find that this is still the case for Israel. Along with the various positions created, there was a body of elders which led the people.

For example:

"From that time on Jesus began to tell his disciples, how he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" Matt 16:21

After the death and resurrection of Christ, however, his chosen and endowed Apostles, acting both in the power and authority of Christ, established the basis of NT church leadership. In doing so, they built upon the practical foundation of the established 'elder' tradition.

All Christians are bestowed with certain aspects or ministries inspired by the roles of prophets, priests and kings (See for example: 1Pet 2:9 ; Rev 1:6). But these concepts were not chosen to represent God's design for NT church leadership. Instead he chose that of the elder.

In Acts 15 ('The Jerusalem Council') we see how, even in the early days of the apostles, the church 'elders' worked right along with the apostles to solve problems. There is no indication given of who these first church elders were, how they were chosen, when they originated or how

they were organized, and thus it would appear that their role was established by more or less traditional patterns.

In Acts 14:23 we learn that Paul, as he traveled with the gospel and churches were formed, “appointed” elders as leaders in each church. (Note the word for church in this passage is singular while the word for elders is plural indicating that a single church would normally have more than one elder; a plurality of leadership).

This pattern of appointing elders in the churches was carried on beyond the apostles themselves. Paul would later instruct his understudy to do likewise; to appoint elders in each place (Titus 1:5).

From the following passages it can be deduced that a local body of elders is the New Testament pattern for church leadership.

- Acts 20:17,28-38 indicates that elders are responsible for the care and oversight of the church body and to guard it against false teaching.
- In Acts 21:18-25 the elders worked along with the Apostles to provide spiritual guidance for the churches.
- In James 5:13-15 the apostle James encourages those who are sick to “call for the elders” to have them pray for them.
- In 1Peter 5:1-5 the apostle Peter instructs the elders to “shepherd God’s flock” on behalf of the “Chief Shepherd”.

The Office of Deacon:

The word ‘deacon’ has something in common with the word ‘elder’. Both are words having a general meaning and usage but both are also used in a more technical sense to refer to an actual leadership office. This indicates the natural development of these offices.

The term ‘deacon’ is actually a ‘transliteration’ of the Greek word ‘diakonos’. It was the regular Greek word for ‘servant’ and was used in a general sense to refer to anyone who served another. (See for example Mark 10:43)

It is not clear when the term ‘deacon’ began to be used in a more technical sense to refer to an office in the NT church. It is of interest to note that the OT prophets had their appointed servants (See for example 2Kings 4:11,12 ; 6:15). Once again it would seem that these things developed from traditional patterns established over time. What is clear is that Phil 1:1 and 1Tim 3:8-12 refer to both ‘elders’ and ‘deacons’ as the two distinct groups of officers established in the church at that time.

Some believe the NT church office of deacon began very early as recorded in Acts chapter six. Here the apostles were overwhelmed with some of the practical problems facing the church and so the church appointed seven men to look after those concerns thus allowing the apostles to maintain their focus on prayer and the teaching of the Word of God (Acts 6:1-6). Even though the seven men in this passage are not referred to as ‘deacons’, their support role is clearly identified and is consistent with the information which comes latter in the NT in reference to ‘deacons’. When we get to the qualifications of elders and deacons (1Tim 3 & Titus 1) it is very significant that the major distinction in qualifications is that, while elders must be able to teach and defend Bible doctrine, no such qualification is listed for deacons. This would seem to indicate that

deacons were chosen more for practical assistance so that the elders would not be overwhelmed.

It is from this that we deduce that the role of the “deaconate” is to handle practical administrative concerns thus sharing the work load of the elders freeing them up for overall leadership, for prayer and teaching ministry.

The Two Offices of the NT Church:

There are two offices indicated in the NT for the church.

“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the *overseers and deacons*” Phil 1:1

It is important to recognize that the terms ‘elder’, ‘pastor’ (meaning ‘shepherd’), and ‘overseer’ (KJV ‘bishop’) all refer to the same NT church office. This can be readily seen in the following passages where the words and/or concepts are used interchangeably: Acts 20:17-28; Titus 1:5-7; 1Pet 5:1-5. Therefore, the one office mentioned is that of “elder” (or “pastor”, or “overseer”) and the other is that of the “deacon”.

All of this must not be interpreted to mean that we are forbidden to create other positions and ministries in our church as required. The NT mandate calls for a pragmatic approach to getting the job done (See for example 1Cor 9:19-23). What it does mean however, is that the appointments and positions we create need to be consistent with the biblical framework provided by the NT writers. This is to say that regardless of what positions and titles we care to add, a council of elders assisted by appointed deacons are responsible to lead the local church and the church needs to recognize their calling of God to do so. This is the form of government adopted in the bylaws of Faith Baptist Church. Though we have added some officers like ‘treasurer’ and ‘tellers’ and so on, the Elders are those given the responsibility and authority to lead assisted by the Deacons.

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The Nature of NT Leadership:

It is also important to remember in this context that whatever form in which it exists, or whatever structures are employed, **NT leadership is always to be service oriented** rather than dictatorial (Jn 13:1-17 ; Lk 22:24-27 ; 2Cor 1:24; 13:10 ; 1Thess 2:6-12 ; 2Tim 2:24-26 ; 1Pet 5:3). Members are instructed by Scripture to respect and cooperate with their leaders (1Thess 5:12,13 ; Heb 13:17) but this is directed to the conscience of the individual. That is to say that it is not the place of the leader to demand obedience, rather the responsibility of the member to follow the lead of those in leadership in good conscience. Furthermore, no person should be expected to act against their conscience as we are instructed to ‘obey God rather than men’, regardless of what human title someone might have.

We cannot lead on the basis of force. That is not NT leadership. We are to lead on a basis of **respect**. We need to earn the confidence of the people always acting in good conscience as examples of the faith so that people will gladly place their confidence in us and so that their confidence will not be misplaced.

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On this note, let us say that, it IS possible to place too much emphasis on leadership in the NT church. We don't want this truth to be lost in our pursuit to recognize the importance of leadership. It has been said that leadership is everything. Well, with respect, we think not. It is essential, but it is not the whole. Each member of the body makes up the whole and while we must recognize that leadership is a crucial and biblical concept for Christ's church, the emphasis with His church, according to His Spirit by the Word is upon **body life** with all believers being called to serve God as part of a team.

Leadership is to be viewed then, as necessary, but with the role clearly defined so as to encourage and facilitate the involvement of each believer in full kingdom life with the ultimate challenge of the great commission calling.

Leadership without genuine humility is ugly and distorted and is condemned by Scripture.

A Plurality of Elders:

Something else we would want to set out as being very important in these matters is that the NT teaches a **plurality** of elders. It is understood that there be those who seem to believe otherwise but one wonders how they could do so while maintaining any great respect for the clear written Word. The following verses show clearly how NT church leadership is to be a plurality.

- **Acts 20:28 ; 14:23 ; 1Tim 5:17** - **Elders Plural**
- **Acts 6:3-6 ; Phil 1:1 ; 1Tim 3:8-13** - **Deacons Plural**

In 1Tim 3:2 Paul uses the singular ('the overseer') but it is a "generic singular representing an entire class or type". Paul does the same thing with widows (see 1Tim 5:3). We do the same thing in modern day English. (IE. "A cop has to be brave" to mean "cops must be brave").

Make no mistake. Leadership is not meant to be a 'one man show' but rather a team of leaders working together, and all of them working with all the members of the body. **Unity** and

cooperation are the concepts that are stressed throughout the letters to the churches (For example see 1Cor 12:12-26 ; Eph 4:1-6 ; Phil 2:1-4).

Plurality of leadership should not be understood to mean that everyone's influence will be equal within the leadership council. Each leader must earn the respect that is required for confident leading. The principle is that of a leadership team. There will usually be those who have more wisdom, experience or insight, but those ones can never afford to think that they don't need the help of the others, just as a leadership team can never afford to think they don't need to listen to the rest of the body. Pride is perhaps the greatest enemy of the leader.

“Pride is perhaps the greatest enemy of the leader.”

What God is looking for in Elders and Deacons:

We have touched on a number of passages which give us numerous insights into some of the issues of biblical leadership and they need to be appreciated for what they have to teach us. However, for our purposes here in this short study, we will now for the remainder turn to that place in the NT which most fully addresses elders and deacons.

Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus are known as the 'pastoral epistles' because Paul's purpose for writing them was to instruct and encourage his young pastoral protégé's as they faced the important task of establishing new leadership in young churches.

1Tim 3 and Titus 1 are parallel passages in which Paul gives his instructions regarding the qualifications for elders and deacons in the church of Jesus Christ. These passages are filled with essential information and we now turn to 1Tim 3:1-13 to consider from that passage what God expects of those He calls to these positions.

A Study in Character:

“Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them let them serve as deacons.

In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus."

1 Timothy 3:1-13

As we look over this list of qualifications one thing quickly becomes apparent and it is a most important observation to make - The emphasis, when it comes to NT church leadership, is clearly upon **character**.

It is doubtful that this could be over-emphasized. It is part of the wisdom of God, a wisdom which is foolishness to the world. Naturally we tend to think that what would matter in leadership would be any number of different abilities. But there is only really one qualification that could really be said to be an ability mentioned in this whole list ("able to teach") and the rest are more character qualities.

"The church is looking for better methods. God is looking for better men."

E. M. Bounds

Remember then, as we take a look at the items on this list, that the one over-riding concern which dominates the passage is that God expects those who lead to be men of character. Paul refers to it as a 'noble task' (v1) Someone has pointed out how "a noble task requires noble men".

In the passage, Paul mentions elders first and then deacons. However, when we understand that the issue for both is character, then we realize that each of these qualifications really apply to all perhaps in more or less degree. It is in fact obvious that all Christians are to develop these characteristics in their lives. The point here then is that Christian leaders are to exemplify Christian character.

"Christian leaders are to exemplify Christian character."

Because of this truth, it is helpful with each requirement to ask the question - "Why is this important for elders?" or "Why is this important for deacons?" The first part of the answer to this question in each case will always be, "Because it is important for all Christians and since the leader is to lead by example ... (1Tim 4:12) Then, of course, there will be reasons beyond this why it might be particularly necessary for the elder or deacon to have the particular character quality considering the nature of the role.

Because the emphasis is on character, which applies to all, and in order to simplify this study, we will consider all of the qualifications (character qualities) as one list. This is simply a practical approach to what we see as a study in character. Our intentions would seem to be in line with Paul at least as he uses the term 'likewise' when shifting focus from one office to another (verse 8). Most of the qualifications mentioned in reference to deacons are the same or very similar in concept to those previously mentioned for elders.

What God is looking for in those who would lead His people is not education, wealth, social status, success, or even great spiritual gifts. He is looking for men of character; men of noble character.

#1. "Above Reproach" (anepilempton):

This concept brackets the list (v2, "good reputation" v7, and with deacons v10). As such, it is the overarching principle that sums up all the qualifications. It is the main idea. Think of it as the trunk of the tree with all the others being branches.

All God's saints are to live holy and blameless lives (Phil 2:15; 1Thess 5:23). So, what is the difference? Anyone who seeks or is being considered for eldership **must** be above reproach. There is more expected of the leader. This is something that is just true. And it's hard to appreciate until you are in the position! Why? There is the importance of example that we discussed previously, but there is also the fact that groups are usually judged by their leaders (1Pet 3:15,16).

Titus 1:7 says that an elder must be "above reproach as God's *steward*". You will remember that a steward must be found faithful (1Cor 4:1-5). He was one entrusted with what belongs to God. A steward was the servant who had responsibility to take care and manage the household of his master. Whose church is it? The church is 'the bride of Christ' ... His body ... the temple of the Lord ... (see 1Tim 3:14,15 "God's household" is the same word as in 3:5.)

In the OT, Job was undoubtedly an elder amongst the people. What kind of a man was he? - "Blameless" (Job 1:1)

This doesn't mean that an elder will be above accusation! (1Pet 3:16; 1Tim 5:19). In fact, it is typical for leaders to be accused more than others.

When we were kids we used to play Cowboys and Indians. And we played intelligently. We understood from all those old movies that "If you shoot the chief, all the others will scatter". Satan is very "cunning" (2Cor 2:11 "we are not ignorant of his devices") and he will attack the leadership.

The word in the Greek here ("an-ep-eel'-ape-tos") is literally "not to be taken hold on". That is metaphorically - "His conduct should be of such a nature that *no handle* is given to anyone by which to injure his reputation" (Homer A Kent, Jr). Now, I find that very descriptive! Satan can't get a hold on you unless you give him *a handle*!

#2. "A One Woman Man":

This phrase has been described as being "painfully controversial". It has been interpreted to mean different things. One interpretation held by some ancient and some modern expositors disqualifies remarried widowers!

"A second marriage, although perfectly lawful and in some cases advisable, was so far a sign of weakness; a double family would in many cases be a serious hindrance to work. The church could not afford to enlist any but its strongest men among its officers; and its officers must not be hampered more than other men with domestic cares."

Alfred Plummer in "The Expositor's Bible"

In our opinion, this hardly deserves serious consideration.

Another absurd interpretation would disqualify the bachelor! (same logic would demand he have children - verse 4)

A very common interpretation in our day disqualifies anyone divorced &/or remarried. It is at this point where things become 'painfully controversial'.

We prefer another interpretation that is better "grammatically, biblically and logically" Ed Glasscock

- Grammatically, the statement consists of only **three words**, "one woman man". The word here translated "wife" (NASB 'woman') is translated such 92xs in the NT while it is translated 129xs as "woman" (in the KJV). The word here translated "husband" is so translated 50xs while it is translated "man" 156xs. The thing is that the Greeks didn't have separate words like we do for identifying a spouse. They used only 'man' or 'woman' ("You my woman" ☺ .)

And the word "one" is in the emphatic position, and the two nouns are without the definite article, which construction "emphasizes character or nature" according to Kenneth Wuest = literally - "a one woman man" or "a one woman kind of man".

If it was Paul's intention to exclude people with divorce in their background, there were ways he could have said it very clearly and simply. Like he did with the prohibition against the abuse of wine or violence. This would also have avoided any confusion like "what about a man who is divorced but not remarried"?! But this phrase is not put as a prohibition but as a positive statement further suggesting that it is a quality of character that Paul has in mind. So if Paul had intended to exclude divorced men, why didn't he just say so? ie "not guilty of divorce".

The requirements are based on what a man is, not what he once was - "an overseer must **be** ..."

- Biblically, this fits the context which is listing the **character qualities** for perspective elders, where a reference to marital status would mean a change of emphasis.

Furthermore, this one absolute and unqualified statement (and the Bible contains a number of these difficult phrases) should not be given precedence over the clear and general teaching of Scripture or be interpreted in a way that would cause it to be a contradiction to the rest of Scripture.

Specifically, our interpretation needs to be consistent with what we know to be true about the forgiveness of sin and the new life we have in Christ? The interpretation which excludes men with divorce in their backgrounds make divorce into an unpardonable sin.

It is interesting to note different examples from different situations. For example, Clement of Alexandria (died in 215 AD) says that Zacchaeus went on to become the Bishop (Pastor) of Ceasarea. Zacchaeus was a converted crook! - ICNT/Luke (New International Commentary on The NT book of Luke by Geldenhuys)

We need to be careful to avoid the Pharisaic error of binding men with unnecessary and oppressive burdens (Mt 23:1-4; Acts 15:10).

"For those concerned with the testimony of the church, let them consider which glorifies God more, that He takes an unworthy, defiled human and makes him pure enough to become His own servant (1Tim 1:12-16) or that, though God forgives, He does not let a man's past sins be forgotten?" Glasscock

“Certainly one cannot attempt to make the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 apply to a man’s life before he is saved. If God has forgiven him and made him a part of His church, why do Christians hold his past against him? ... It does not seem possible that (Paul) ... intends to hold a man’s pre-conversion sins against him... To judge a man’s spiritual qualities on the basis of a sin committed before he was saved, before he was capable of understanding God’s will or Word, and before he has the power of Christ’s life within him is to create a false standard that detracts from God’s wonderful grace and which also fails to deal with *the real issue of 1Tim 3.*” Ed Glasscock “The Husband of One Wife Requirement in 1 Timothy 3:2 Bibliotheca Sacra July / Sept 83

“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” 1Cor 6:9-11

- Logically:

“If a church is bound to judge its members on the consequences of their lives before conversion, who then could meet the majority of the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3?”
Glasscock

And, if divorce and remarriage results in a continued “state of sin” as some would suggest, then what should a person who has been divorced and remarried do to get right with God? Should he divorce his present wife in order to remarry his first wife again? This is expressly forbidden in Scripture! Or is such a one simply condemned to live the rest of their days in this “state of sin”? What if the spouse has remarried as well?

It is important at this point to acknowledge that someone who is Christian and has any degree of knowledge and discards his wife for another is certainly not a “one woman man” by any stretch of this passage. And neither is a man who remains married to his wife while behaving himself inappropriately with other women.

It may be simpler and safer to offer an impersonal and sweeping judgment forbidding anyone who has been divorced (or married to someone who has been divorced) from holding an office, but we must be careful to base our practice not on emotional overreaction to the world’s immorality, but on true grammatical, contextual, historical and theological grounds.

What kind of man qualifies to be an elder? One that is faithful, not flirtatious, promiscuous, or involved in questionable relationships with other women. Not one who has a problem being faithful and monogamous, but one who has shown himself to be “a one woman man”. Viewed this way, Paul is not referring to the marital status but to a **character** trait. This is consistent with the context, both immediate and remote, and is the plain wording of the text.

This qualification is repeated for the deacons (verse 12).

#3. “Temperate” (nephalion):

Literally the Greek word means “wineless” or “sobriety”. A few interpreters think it should be taken literally but that is unlikely. For one thing, Paul refers later to the alcohol issue (v3).

This word and the one that follows are very close in meaning as is obvious from the choice of words in the various translations. For example, some would choose 'sober' here while the KJV uses 'sober' for the next word. Some would use 'self-controlled' here while NIV uses 'self-controlled' for next word. The idea of self-control is found in both these terms.

The noun appears only in the pastoral epistles, but the verb form is used in:

1Pet 5:8	“... be self controlled...”
2Tim 4:3-5	“... but you keep your head in all situations...”
1Thess 5:6-8	“... self controlled... self controlled...”

It would appear that this is the ability to be calm or unimpassioned; the quality that resists the temptation to indulge oneself. (See 1Cor 9:24-27)

#4. “Self-controlled” (sophrona):

They say this is a very difficult word to translate. The NIV has “self controlled”, the KJV has “sober” and the NASB has “prudent” (But NASB has “sensible” in Titus 1 for the same word!?). Literally it means soundness of mind or sober-minded. It seems to have the idea of sound judgment or sensible thinking, or reasonableness.

Rom 12:3 “... think of yourself with sober judgment...” (NASB “sound judgment.”)

It would appear to be the opposite of being excessive or imbalanced.

Perhaps a negative biblical example would be Diotrephes in 3John 9,10 who seemed to be a leader out of control.

Proverbs 25:28 says that a man who lacks self-control is like a city without walls.

This term and the one proceeding it, being similar in meaning, together indicate the quality required in an elder that he would be totally unfit without. Can you imagine a shepherd who is unreasonable, undisciplined, rash, excessive, always getting carried away, not having his wits about him It is not to be of the elder. The opposite is to be true. He is to be sound-minded, sober and in control. He is to be sensible, reasonable, and balanced, having sound judgment.

These qualities are especially those associated with **maturity**.

These, along with the other qualities listed here are most evident in the life of the Lord Jesus himself of course and it is good to read the gospels and witness the strength of his character.

#5. “Respectable” (kosmeeos):

This word again is also closely identified with the two which proceed it. It has the idea of being organized. It would be the opposite of confusion. Interesting that it comes from the word ‘cosmos’. When the ancients thought of the skies, they thought of organization. Quite a profoundly accurate assessment of the heavens I would say.

It is used to describe orderliness in appearance or dress (1Tim 2:9) but undoubtedly, it has a broader intent here in 1Tim 3. The apostle has a character quality in mind and he is thinking of someone **who has his life in order**.

At Thessalonica, believers were living disorderly lives (1Thess 5:14 ; 2Thess 3:6-14). This is a different Greek word (at-ak'toce), but with similar meaning - "disorderly or out of rank (often so of soldiers); irregular; deviating from prescribed order or rule". And, according to Strong's, the Greeks used the word in reference to those who refused to work (thus the NIV has "idle"). So Paul admonishes them to live orderly and respect orderliness (1Thess 4:12-14).

Why is this so important? Because if your life isn't in order, it's in chaos (turmoil, confusion...). Now, who is the author of confusion? If your life isn't in order, who is in control of your life?

How do you get your life in order? By putting Christ first in your life (Matt 6:33) and of course by the Spirit's enabling.

* Remember, the only person who has ever demonstrated all of these character qualities, or any of them in any complete sense, is Christ himself. These character qualities are really the character qualities of Christ. As such they are the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22,23), and if we are going to have them, we must allow Christ to live His life out through us; we must allow his Spirit to produce the fruit in us which He does when we surrender our lives to Him.

The principle in all of this as it pertains to leadership is quite simply put: **He who would manage others must first be able to manage himself!**

#6. "Hospitable" (fil-ox'- en-os):

This too is a very interesting word. It comes from a word that literally means "**lover of strangers**".

In that day, finding decent accommodations was impossible most of the time. Imagine how important it was in that case for missionaries, messengers, or ministers of the gospel to be able to travel

3John 5-8 suggests we need to be partners in hospitality.

The virtue of hospitality is ancient.

"For no stranger had to spend the night in the street, for my door was always open to the traveler." Job 31:32

We as Maritimers are famous for it. It used to be that around here you couldn't go anywhere without confronting the tea pot. Even if they didn't like you!

Again, all Christians are instructed to "practice hospitality" (Rom 12:13) and the apostle Peter instructs that it be "without grumbling". (1Pet 4:9) And the author of the book of Hebrews tells us that we should be hospitable because some have "entertained angels unaware" (Heb 13:2).

We need to always be practicing hospitality with one another as Peter admonishes us, but we also need to be offering the same concern for strangers? Remember that this is the origin of the word. We live in a time when there is so much fear and mistrust and a lot of it is for good reason. You watch the news and What exactly does the command to be "lovers of strangers" really obligate us to do? Well, it does involve risk. Consider the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Whenever we move to help someone there is always some risk involved. We are wise to be careful, but we must not allow concern for ourselves to prevent us from doing the will of God.

However, there are conditions attached to NT hospitality and we would be wise to observe them. (See for example 2John 7-11)

How are we to “practice hospitality”? There is the broad sense in which it has the idea of just being good to people and caring and meeting people’s needs. But hospitality really means - **the opening of your heart and your home**. It doesn’t mean “entertaining guests”, nor trying to impress people. It’s nothing to get nervous about! Hospitality is more likely to happen around a bowl of chicken noodle soup than it is around a fancy dinner. Remember Mary and Martha and Jesus? *“Mary, you need to learn to relax and enjoy my company”*.

You do a lot of your living at home. If people are really going to get to know one another, then it is pretty likely that at some point they are going to have to spend some time on each others turf.

“Come to my place” (Jn 1:35-39).

How much has happened as a result of these words? I love the practical-ness of it. Love one another, honor one another ... as much a blessing as these directives are, they can all seem to be pretty general but hospitality is easily identified for what it is.

#7. “Able to Teach” (did ak tik os):

As mentioned earlier, this is perhaps the only item in the list that goes beyond the issue of character and into the arena of skill. It is also important to point out again that this is the primary distinctive between the role of ‘elder’ and that of ‘deacon’ as elders are the ones who must be ‘able to teach’ the Scriptures. Note that it doesn’t say he must be able to lead singing or do administrative work or these things are great and desirable for a shepherd, but the concern here is for the one grand essential skill.

The Christian community is built on the Scriptures. Those who oversee must be able to teach the Scriptures. And to teach the Scriptures, you must know the Scriptures.

There is a gift of teaching (Rom 12:7; 1Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11), but while that is desirable here, it is not necessary. Nor is it the case that all elders will have a “pulpit ministry” (1Tim 5:17,18). But the elder must be able one on one or in small groups to teach doctrine.

This area figures prominently in the parallel passage.

“He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.” Titus 1:9 (See also Titus 1:10 -14; 2:1 and following)

‘Sound’ here has the idea of ‘whole’ or ‘healthy’ (Lk 5:31; 3Jn 2). It is in contrast to false doctrine which is “corrupt” and destroys (Titus 1:11,15,16).

We are told that the early church continued in the “Apostles teachings” (Acts 2:42) Likewise, Paul’s last words to the elders of Ephesus make it abundantly clear that this was the primary role of the elders (Acts 20:27-32).

“Only by the Word can the church grow and be protected from corruption. The failure of church leaders to know and teach the Bible is one of the chief reasons why biblical error floods our churches and drowns the power and life of the church. Therefore, the elders must be able to teach the Word of God” Unknown source

The NT, in various places, warns the church against: ‘doctrines of demons’, ‘destructive heresies’, ‘myths’, ‘falsehoods’, ‘perverse teachings’, ‘commandments of men – mere human

traditions', 'empty philosophy', 'vain deceit', 'speculations', 'lying spirits', 'worldly fables', 'false knowledge', 'worldly wisdom', 'false prophets in sheep's clothing', and many other things that can only be addressed by the clear skillful teaching of the Word of God. This is both the privilege and the responsibility of the elders.

Though this sets elders and deacons apart we must not make too much of a distinction. While it is the elders who need to be able to teach, Paul later says of deacons (verse 9) that they "must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience". Deacons do not need to be able to teach the Scriptures but they cannot be ignorant of them either. The Scriptures are the ultimate rule for all of our faith and practice. It is important for all leaders in the church to know their Bibles well.

#8. "Not Given to Drunkenness" (par oy nos):

Now we are getting into a few 'not' s. Here, it is literally "not beside wine", as in one who sits long beside wine. The idea seems to be that of addiction, over indulgence, or preoccupation. The term also has a secondary meaning, that of being violent as a result of drinking. This leads into the next term.

By implication, an elder is someone who has his needs met by Christ and doesn't need "liquid peace" (or 'vengeance' see #9).

This becomes another area of controversy. Some Christians in modern times believe that any consumption of alcohol is completely unacceptable. While we can certainly appreciate these strong feelings and the dangers presented by alcohol consumption, the plain fact of the matter is that the Bible does not teach abstinence.

When speaking of deacons, Paul says that a deacon should not be one "indulging in much wine" (1Tim 3:8).

The Bible does very clearly say that drunkenness is unacceptable, but does not forbid the use of alcohol completely. Furthermore, we must strain to avoid the temptation to go beyond what the Scriptures say. This is where the Pharisees got themselves into all kinds of trouble.

Later, Paul instructs Timothy to "take a little wine for your stomach" (1Tim 5:23). It would appear further that Jesus himself partook, though we must hasten to add that the wine used commonly in Jesus' day would be mostly water.

Much of the controversy on this matter can be avoided when we, once again, recognize this to be an issue of character. A person who has a drinking problem has a character problem. It is character which is in view here. The question is not whether someone has a drink. The question is rather, does the drink have them? Remember, a leader must be under control.

Note this: Even though the Bible does not teach abstinence, it does give us some important principles when dealing with these types of issues. You are encouraged to carefully study these passages. They teach us that even in areas where we may feel free to participate in an activity, we are right to abstain if such an activity would cause a brother to stumble in their faith (Rom 14:13-23 ; 1Cor 8:1-13). The principle is that people are more important than our liberty in these things. These passages must be carefully studied and applied.

#9. "Not Violent" (plake tace):

A leader is not to be a fighter; not a brawler; not a 'quick tempered person' (Titus 1:7). He isn't to be a 'hot-head'.

“ ‘Vengeance is mine’, says the Lord.” Rom 12:17-21; 1Peter 3:9;

The leader must maintain a testimony of peace and love to those without and certainly God is concerned with protecting the 'sheep' from a carnal shepherd's wrath. Furthermore, those who would follow the biblical leader need to follow out of respect, not out of fear or intimidation.

A Christian leader must exemplify the teachings of Christ who taught us to “turn the other cheek” (Luke 6:29). Christ most certainly exemplified his own teaching in this regard (John 18:23).

“When He was reviled, reviled not again” 1Peter 2:21-23

This should not be taken to mean what some have suggested which would leave us even without the moral right to protect ourselves or our families. The rule of law in society still applies (Rom 13) and Christians cannot become 'door mats for Jesus'. But it does mean that a Christian leader must be a man of peace.

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” Rom 12:18

#10. “Gentle” (ep ee I kace):

What kind of a disposition must a man have to qualify him to serve as an elder (or a deacon)? He must be gentle. This is obviously in contrast to the two preceding terms.

The commentators say that there is no English word that adequately conveys the full meaning of this Greek word. They suggest terms like *gentle*, *patient*, *peaceful*, *forbearing*, *gracious*, all of which seem to be a part of what the Greek word means.

A “gentle” person is a person who exhibits **a willingness to yield!** A 'gentle' person goes around people if possible and if asked to move, moves.

It doesn't mean he is a 'wishy washy' sit on the 'fence' kind of guy. When he needs to take a stand, he does (See Titus 1 on opposing and defending). But he makes allowances for the weakness and ignorance of fallen man. He doesn't insist on personal rights or the “letter of the law” and he doesn't need to retaliate (Remember 1Peter 2:21-23).

“And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone ... those who oppose him he must gently instruct ...” 2Tim 2:24,25

Real wisdom is peace loving, considerate, submissive, and full of mercy (James 3:17,18). We are instructed away from bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander & malice and told to be kind, tenderhearted & forgiving (Eph 4:29-32)

Real shepherds don't lead with domineering force. They don't “beat” the sheep into submission. They lead the sheep into submission by being submissive themselves. They earn the respect of the people and compel by love. (Lk 22:25,26 ; 2Cor 1:24 ; 13:10 ; Pet 5:3). There will be times when people need to be admonished, exhorted or rebuked but always with gentleness (2Tim 4:2).

Paul uses the same Greek word to tell us that all of us as Christians are to be 'gentle' (Phil 4:5). And He also uses this same Greek word to tell us that Christ himself was 'gentle' (2Cor 10:1). Remember that each of these qualities is necessary for the leader to serve as an example of Christian faith and life, which means that all of them are desirable for all Christians.

But as for why this character trait is additionally important for leaders, what is an elder responsible to do? Shepherding is something that requires gentleness.... "Savior, like a shepherd lead us, much we need Thy tender care".

* Note this well. The biblical concept of leadership includes submission. Not just to the Lord as the head of the Church and the Great Shepherd, but to those we are attempting to lead! That is a vital part of what it means to be a servant leader. And that is what Jesus taught. And that is radical!

#11. "Not Quarrelsome" (am akh os):

The term literally meant 'not fighting', but came over time to mean metaphorically 'not contentious' (see NASB).

What is a contentious person like?

Unfortunately, the church of Jesus Christ has been plagued by contentious people. Many churches are crippled by infighting and power struggles. A contentious person is a person who for some reason likes to make things difficult. They are not happy unless there is conflict.

It is interesting that the word in the Greek signifies "*invisible*"! That is interesting in light of the previous characteristic of gentleness which denoted submission. Here we have a person who **has to win** at any cost. We all know and have been in situations, on one end or the other, where the battle was won but the person was lost. That's when you lose by winning. An elder must be free from this type of character weakness. He doesn't have the need to fight for status, recognition, to be heard, attention, to get his way....

A leader must be able to confront, but not be confrontational.

"It is to a man's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel." Proverbs 20:3 and one of the things the Lord hates is a man who "stirs up dissension among brothers". (Pro 6:19)

#12. "Not a Lover of Money" (af il ar goo ros):

Literally, "not a lover of silver".

The apostle Peter also warns elders against greed (1Peter 5:2). The Pharisees were lovers of money (Luke 16:14) who devoured widows houses (Mk 12:40).

How many people in our day have been scandalized by popular religious leaders who employ questionable methods and prey upon the disadvantaged?

Again, it is important for all believers to be wary of greed (1Tim 6:6-10) and to be "*free from the love of money*" (Heb 13:5). It is a very serious spiritual matter and leaders are to set the example.

It is also important as these leaders will be handling money (Acts 11:30) and some also receive wages for their work (1Tim 5:17,18; Lev 19:13; Numbers 18:20-32; Deut 24:14,15; Matt 10:10; Lk 10:7; 1Cor 9:14)

Paul himself set a wonderful example in this regard (see Acts 20:33)

Later, in verse 8, Paul says that a deacon must be one "not pursuing dishonest gain". The idea is similar. It is a warning against greed and calls for the ongoing examination of our motives.

#13. “Must Manage His Own Family Well”

“Must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?”
1Tim 3:4,5

Titus 1:6 has *“having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly”* (KJV)

The term here for “manage’ is ‘prohistemi’ (1Thess 5:12; 1Tim 5:17). Literally, it means ‘to stand before’ and therefore, by implication, to lead.

Traditionally, this verse has been interpreted in such a way that harsh and even violent men would qualify because they kept their families in line, while some others were unnecessarily excluded. But the context of ‘temperance’, ‘self-control’, ‘gentleness’, ‘not violent or quarrelsome’ would suggest otherwise.

It is of the utmost importance to recognize that **the ‘respect’** (“sem-not’-ace”) **mentioned here is a quality to be evidenced in the man, not the family.** One commentator calls it ‘the characteristic of a thing or person which entitles to reverence and respect’. This is a very important distinction. The question is, does the person warrant the respect of those who know him best? Does he have the respect of his family? (Eph 6:1-3) If you really want to know about a man, ask his family!

People have rightly pointed out about this passage, that Paul doesn’t say anything about how he manages a store or a factory or a ball team or a hotel or an office or He could be very successful in any of these but still not be qualified as an elder. Consider this in light of how often churches call pastors, or appoint other elders, without even meeting with or talking with a family member! Often the things the decisions are based on have little to do with what Paul lays out here.

A good deal of discussion takes place around this passage. Just how are we to interpret it specifically? Does it mean to disqualify any man who has children that are not serving the Lord? What if a man has 2 and one is and one isn’t? Does it apply to grown children or children still at home only? Or does it apply only to grown children? These are some of the questions people have.

The Bible does teach that children will be greatly influenced by their parental upbringing (Pro 22:6 ; Eph 6:1-4). This is important. However, it is also important to realize that the Bible also teaches that each and every person makes their own choices and decisions and that sometimes, in spite of all our best efforts to encourage otherwise, our children make bad choices. And when they do, they will be held accountable (Ezekiel 18:1-4).

“The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him.” Ezek 18:20

The Bible tells of a number of godly men who raised children who did not do so good. David is one example. Samuel is another. No one would question that someone like Samuel was not a good leader and it is hard to imagine that he wasn’t a caring father.

Perhaps the best example is God himself.

“Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the Lord has spoken: ‘I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me.’” Isaiah 1:2

“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me?” Malachi 1:6

We need to exercise great care in interpreting these qualifications. The point being made by the apostle is the home life is the best proving ground for leadership. We mustn't go beyond the principal to suggest that good parenting will result in automatic salvation.

In his book, “Parenting Isn't For Cowards”, James Dobson tells of an acquaintance of his who had a wife and together they had three beautiful and compliant children. All three made straight A's in school, kept their rooms neat and clean, were talented, athletic, and polite. It was like they were perfect. He tells how the parents used to go on about the wonderful job they had done, taking full credit for raising their three ‘perfect’ children. Then an interesting thing happened. To use Dobson's words, “The Lord, who must have a sense of humor, gift wrapped a little tornado and sent it as a surprise package on the mother's fortieth birthday.” You can use your imagination for the rest of the story.

Someone has said, “Confidence is what you have before you understand the situation”!

The truth of the matter is that many grown children not serving God themselves would, if asked, express nothing but appreciation and respect for the quality of life of their Christian parents. These parents bear enough pain brought on by their child's waywardness. Let's be careful not to add false guilt to the load they bear.

These things need to be explored. There is no question from the passage, but what good leadership in the home is a prerequisite for leadership in the church, but we need again to be reminded that the issue is one of **character**. There is a significant difference between a child growing up and deciding not to follow Christ and a child growing up without respect for his or her father or mother. It is certainly the latter that Paul is concerned about here in this passage.

When we couple this statement with the “one woman man” qualification, we get a good feel for how important family life is to the Lord. We also get a sense for just how much the church is a family; the family of God. In fact, in verse 15 God's ‘household’ is the same Greek word. I love the following passage for this reason:

“Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.” 1Tim 5:1,2

This qualification on family life is repeated in reference to deacons (verse 12).

#14. “Not a Recent Convert”

“Neophutos” literally means “newly planted”.

Some would surmise from the title ‘elder’ that one would have to be old to fill the position. While wisdom would be essential, age is apparently not. This is not simply an argument from silence (the fact that age is not listed as a qualification anywhere), for Paul does in fact instruct Timothy not to allow any man to ‘despise’ his youth. (1Tim 4:12)

Though a person does not need to be old to be an ‘elder’ or a ‘deacon’, he does need to be an experienced Christian. There is a real danger in giving these positions to a new believer as Paul expresses here in this passage.

Proverbs 16:18 says “pride goes before a fall”.

Proverbs 11:2 links humility with wisdom, as does James 3:13.

There are a number of biblical examples of this. Here is just one: King Uzziah was a king of Judah (2Chron 26) who did so well in his early years it is said that he “did what was right in the eyes of the Lord” (verse 4). But we are told that “after Uzziah became powerful, his **pride led to his downfall**” (verse 16). When he was confronted about this, he “became angry” and “while he was raging at the priests ... leprosy broke out on his forehead” (verse 19). And “King Uzziah had leprosy until the day he died” (verse 21).

This in no way means that you have to be young to be proud. Older people are not immune to pride by any reckoning. What it does indicate is that if pride is going to be a problem it would be wise to give it some time to show itself. It could also be said that the young, or perhaps the new, might be more vulnerable to pride than the experienced. How does this work? Well, for one thing, life experience has a way of humbling us. Have you noticed that? It will either humble us or it will make us harder, stiff necked and bitter.

Paul says later (verse 10) that a deacon must be ‘tested’ and only then should they be given the office. This ‘test’ is nothing like writing answers down on a piece of paper. The verb is a present imperative which suggests a ‘constant observing’ (Homer Kent page 134). This is the test of time where it can be observed how a person has responded to life and to the Lord which is an indication of heart or **character**.

The judgment mentioned here in verse 6 is of the same nature as that which Satan received, not one that is to be delivered by him (Commentators point out that it is “objective genitive”). Paul refers here to pride as the devil’s sin. (See Ezekiel 28:11-19)

We have been making the point that the primary function of the leader is to be an **example** for the believers. Here Paul instructs Timothy (to put it in the positive) that an elder must be **mature** in the faith. The concept of maturity for the purpose of example, and that not a matter of age, is made clear by Paul later in this statement:

“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are *young*, but set an *example* for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity”

1Tim 4:12

Maturity requires time and experience for which there is no substitute. Commentators figure that the church at Ephesus (where Timothy is as Paul is writing this letter to him) would have been planted for at least 12 years by this time. It is not possible, or desirable, to try and fix a specific time line to this instruction; to say that a person must be a Christian for this many years or whatever. We only need to be wise in observing it as a matter of principle. Leaders need to be experienced and Christian leaders need to be experienced Christians.

#15. “A Good Reputation With Outsiders”

Paul says that an elder must have a good reputation with outsiders “so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap”.

As stated earlier, this phrase, “*a good reputation with outsiders*” and the first on the list, “*above reproach*” kind of serve as “bookends” together presenting the over-riding concept of being tested and proved worthy. They are like parenthesis grouping together the other qualifications. Here however, the emphasis on “outsiders” is significant.

All Christians are to have a good testimony with “outsiders” (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14-16; 1Thess 4:11,12; Titus 2:5,8; 1Peter 2:12,15;3:16). And, since the elder is to function as an example to the believers (1Tim 4:12), then the elder must

There are other reasons why these qualities are especially important for an elder. Remember what we said early on as we talked about an elder being “above reproach”. People tend to judge a group more by it’s leaders.

It is quite a test when you think of it. How do those who don’t share your views view you as a person? We can make all kinds of allowances for ourselves and the ones who love us can make allowances for us, but the world doesn’t make those same allowances. That means that this judgment will be very critical. That is to say, in an important way, this “test” is not an easy one to pass. In other words, they don’t care about your doctrine, but are they impressed by your life? Remember, we are talking about **character**. And perhaps one of the greatest tests of character is the opinion held of you by those who do not agree with you.

We need to be careful at this point. Remember that “above reproach” doesn’t mean above accusation, and “a good reputation with outsiders” shouldn’t be taken to mean that everyone will like you. In fact, Jesus said, “Woe unto you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets” (Luke 6:26). But the question is why does a person like or dislike you? The point that Christ makes is that it does not speak well of us when those of poor character speak well of us. And we should not be so naive as to believe that unbelievers are not going to be offended by the message that we proclaim and respond with all kinds of personal criticism (1Cor 1:23). Christ spoke a great deal about the persecution of the world against the saints and we have also the example of Paul and the other apostles along with the early church in general.

“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”
2Tim 3:12

However, the point is to make sure that it is the message that is offending people and not the messenger. Or more to the point, make sure that if a person is offended, they are offended for the right reason.

So, just as we said the real testing ground of a man’s ability to lead is the home, so we could say that the real test of his credibility is not on Sunday morning but Monday through Saturday as he interacts with “outsiders”. This could be said to be the other great testing ground for ministry. The home and the community.

[As stated earlier, the qualifications for elders and deacons alike are character qualities. And there is a great deal of overlap in so much that the qualities mentioned for one are certainly to be looked for in both. Most of the things Paul has mentioned in regard to elders are repeated (at least the descriptors are similar) for deacons. #16-18 do not seem to have parallels in the elders list but certainly like the others would apply to both.]

#16. “Sincere”

Literally ‘me dilogous’ is “not double tongued”.

This could include the idea of refraining from gossip, but different commentators suggest that it would be more likely in reference to the larger character quality of **integrity**; being “double

tongued” meaning those whose lives are inconsistent and lacking integrity. Remember the proverbial native American response to the white man’s treachery? “White man speaks with ‘forked tongue’? That’s the idea.

The ministry of the gospel is not a game. It is for real and therefore there is no place for hypocrisy or insincerity. Leaders must be true. What we profess, we must possess. This type of character is essential for all types of Christian ministry. Our relationships with people must be defined by honesty and integrity. This is a large part of the character issue which distinguishes leadership in the kingdom from that of the world.

The Gender Issue:

We have been referring to men up to this point. That is because every adjective used in the list of qualifications for elders and for deacons up to this point is **masculine**, as is the word ‘overseer’.

As we come to ‘deacons’ however, there is a shift. This shift is signaled by the phrase “In the same way, their wives ...” (1Tim 3:11 NIV). Paul’s attention now goes to women.

It is important to realize (as has already been pointed out) that there was no special term for wife in the Greek. The word here is the word ‘women’. Some have interpreted this to mean the wives of the deacons. Some translations have it that way (such as the KJV and the NIV), but in doing so they are interpreting more than translating (see the NASB).

While there are no references to women serving as elders in the NT church, there were deaconesses. Phoebe is called a deaconess in Romans 16:1.

There are good grammatical reasons for understanding Paul’s statement here in 1Tim 3:11 to be in reference to women deacons or deaconesses rather than just deacons’ wives.

“The grammatical structure of the passage indicates a transition to another class. The use of ‘hosautos’ (likewise) makes this very clear.” Homer A. Kent Jr. page 135

Furthermore,

“There is no pronoun used with ‘gunaikas’ (women) to relate them to the deacons, nor is there even an article which might be used in that sense.” Kent 135

There are no shortage of quotes we could include here but include these only as representative of a large body of commentators seemingly representing the majority of the conservative evangelical position grounded in the good discipline of exegesis.

From these exegetical factors, and from the reference to Phoebe as a deacon or deaconess, we conclude that the office of deacon may include both men and women.

As for elders however, there appears to have been no practice of appointing women to that office. The ultimate oversight of the church is to be seen to by spiritual men.

This we believe to be the only ‘position’ restricted to men in the NT church. Women are gifted to speak and teach and lead, but when it comes to the need for spiritual oversight

of the body, that is to be the responsibility of men whom are called to the position of 'elder' ('overseer' or 'pastor').

Paul has already in this letter made it clear that women are not to be given the role of ultimate leadership in the church for such a move would usurp the authority of the men(1Tim 2:12-15).

The marriage relationship is to be constructed in such a way also with the husband offering loving and sacrificial leadership and the wife respecting her husband and submitting to that leadership in good conscience (1Cor 11:3 ; Eph 5:21-33 ; 1Pet 3:1-7).

This is of course, also a very controversial subject in our modern day. We would hasten to point out that a distinction in role is in no way intended, nor should it be considered, to be an indication of a lesser status before God or man. The biblical teaching is that men and women are equal but different and thus, in some cases, having different roles. Nor is it an excuse of any kind for any kind of sexism which is to suggest some kind of advantage.

Leadership is to give one's life for others; In other words it is made invalid by abuse because it destroys the beauty of the image of love and harmony it is intended to express and is an ugly perversion of the truth such as to become Satan's lie - "That one person exists only to serve another". Remember that love is the greatest of all.

Remember man, the call to leadership is the call to die. It is the call to give your life for another. There is no gloating to be had. Ladies remember, to be a sister, and/or a mother, in the house of the Lord is a place of great honor.

#17. "Not Malicious Talkers"

This adjective ('diabolous') is used in connection with Satan who is the 'accuser of the brethren'. It has the idea of slander.

The KJV rendering is "not slanderous" and Vine's Expository dictionary says that would speak of those who "are given to finding fault with the demeanor and conduct of others and spreading their innuendos and criticisms in the church."

2Tim 3:3 says that this will characterize those in the last days.

Deaconesses (as well as male deacons and elders) must not be those who participate in gossip or hurtful talk about others. Paul mentions three things in reference specifically to deaconesses in this section of Scripture and two of them are included in the larger list of leadership qualities. Perhaps this one stands out because Paul is thinking primarily of women in regard to this vice because it could be said that women tend to be more relational in nature and as such may suffer more danger in this regard. I know that women tend to go deeper in their relationships with each other than men do with each other and it isn't an easy thing. Again, it should be clear that this is a generalization on my part. Either way, it is essential for any leader, man or women, that they be able to steer away from this type of unproductive and even harmful discourse and it is a temptation for us all.

#18. "Trustworthy in Everything" (pistas en pasin):

This is the common Greek word for faithfulness and it is no doubt intended to be a very broad qualification encompassing all of the different aspects of life; domestic, ecclesiastical and community.

It is emphasized as a foundational quality. Paul had written the following to the Corinthian believers: "So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust *must prove faithful.*" 1Cor 4:1,2

Faithfulness is such an important quality for a leader to have. If you are in leadership it means that there are people depending upon you. It is important then that you be dependable.

Overview of list of character qualities:

Testimony: *above reproach*

in relationship to :

- wife (and other women) *faithful*
- self - *temperate, self controlled, respectable*
- others - *hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent, gentle, not quarrelsome, sincere, not malicious talkers, faithful*
- things - *not a lover of money*
- family - *respect of own family and able to manage*
- faith - *mature*
- unbelievers - *good reputation*

As a means of summary, but certainly not wanting to oversimplify, we could say that **character is the issue, testimony is the test, relationships are key, and maturity is the goal.**

A final thought:

It is very important to note and to remember that these people are to be **exemplary, but not exceptional**. Every quality mentioned is a quality that is desirable for all Christians and each of us is in process and can only attain to a partial degree of any quality. On the one hand we must maintain high standards for our leaders as they are to serve as examples to all. On the other hand, we should not be unrealistic keeping in mind that we are talking about people. All people are both unique and ordinary. Our ordinary-ness is part of our ability to be an example too. We do not want to create the attitude that spiritual vitality of life is out of reach for the average believer. We are all in the same boat and we're all in it together.

While being careful to be an example for Christ, humility is absolutely essential on the part of the leader and so is the honesty that makes us 'transparent' with our people. The leader must be able to relate to the people and the people must be able to identify with the leader. There is no room for a 'high horse' in the church of Jesus Christ.

"The ground is level at the foot of the cross".

[This paper contains a number of references from a work called "The Pastoral Epistles" by Homer A. Kent, Jr., The Chicago Press, 1958, 1982]