

# The Office of Overseer

## A Noble Task

**Scripture:** 1 Timothy 3:1-7

**Sermon Series:** *Timothy's Charge*

**Topic:** Overseer, Elder, Pastor

### Introduction

This morning, as we continue through Paul's letter to Timothy, we turn our attention to "The Office of Overseer" and the qualifications to serve in that office.

### Review

As we have noted in weeks past, Paul is giving instructions to Timothy on how the church should be structured (2:1; cf.3:14-15). These instructions are not only for the church in Ephesus, but also for all churches *in every place*" (2:8).

Starting in chapter 2, Paul states an urgent call to the church. He teaches that prayer should be the priority "in every church." Prayer "in every church" should include all kinds of prayers, for all kinds of people, including kings and all those in positions of authority, because there is one God, one Mediator—the man Christ Jesus—who gave himself as one ransom for all nations.

Therefore, "in every" church the men are to pray in holiness, without anger and quarreling while the women are to pray in godliness without improper adornment or sensual clothing but rather with good works. "In every" church women are to be permitted to learn, although in a respectful and submissive attitude, but women are not permitted to teach men or to exercise authority over men (for this is what overseers/elders do, who ought to be men).

There are two reasons for this. The first is creation itself, in which Adam was formed first before Eve and to him God gave primary responsibility to lead. The second reason is the fall, in which when this divine order was abandoned and the women took the lead and the curse followed.



- I. A Sweet Salutation
- II. The Urgent charge to Timothy (1:3-20)
- III. The Urgent Charge to the Church (2:1-4:5)
  - A. Prioritize prayer (2:1-15)
    - 1. I Urge you to Pray (1-4)
    - 2. Pray to God our Savior (2:5-7)
    - 3. Prayer of Men and Women in Church (2:8-15)
      - a) Men: pray in holiness (2:8)
      - b) Women: Pray in godliness (2:9-15)
  - B. **Appoint godly leaders** (3:1-15)
- IV. Additional charge to Timothy

Yet, women ought not feel singularly responsible for the curse for they will be saved through all the effects of the curse (ie. “childbearing” and its pain) if they continue in faith, love, holiness, and self-control.

## Overview

Paul’s charge to the church in chapter 2 was to prioritize prayer. As chapter 3 begins, the charge is *to appoint godly leaders*. And so, since women are not to teach men or exercise authority over men in the church, then what kind of men are to do those tasks? Are all men permitted? Or only some men? Who are the men to whom holy men and godly women in the church must submit? What is this office of overseer? What are the qualifications for those who hold this office? What kind of men ought to oversee Christ’s church. These are the questions to which Paul now turns.

## The Office of Overseer

What is this “office?” What is noble about it? What sort of “task” is it?

<sup>1</sup> The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 1 Timothy 3:1 (ESV)

*The saying is trustworthy.* Paul begins with an emphatic phrase, πιστός ὁ λόγος. Literally, “Faithful /trustworthy is the word.” Paul is emphatically stating that what he is about to say is indeed true. This fact is not to be forgotten by Timothy and it is to be embraced by the church as true and good for the church.

*If anyone* (εἴ τις). Is an indefinite, masculine pronoun, which is reflected with the use of ‘he’ modifying the verb, ‘desires.’<sup>1</sup> This again confirms that Paul has in mind men only for this office and not women.

*The office of overseer.* In Greek this phrase translates one word *episkopē* (ἐπισκοπή), which is sometimes translated ‘bishop.’ The word refers to “a religious role involving both service and leadership—‘office, position, ministry as church leader.’”<sup>2</sup> The ‘office’ relates to the role entrusted to the overseer.<sup>3</sup> The leadership aspect of this word carries the notion of “oversight.”<sup>4</sup> Paul said to the elders of the church of Ephesus, “

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<sup>1</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 168.

<sup>2</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 540–541.

<sup>3</sup> The word ‘office’ is used in Acts 1:20, where Peter quotes Psalm 109:8 regarding finding a replacement for Judas, “Let another take his office.”

<sup>4</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 192.

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [*episkopous*]. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

Acts 20:28

**Aside:** What an astonishing sentence! Did you see it? God bought the church “with his own blood.” But did God die and shed his blood? Or did Jesus? Jesus did of course, not God the Father. But in Paul’s mind, the two are so intricately linked together, that Paul can in good conscience say, “*God bought the church with his own blood.*” This is another of the many clues which has led Christians to the inescapable conclusion that Jesus is not a mere man, but the incarnation of the divine Son of the One true and living God. Now back to idea of ‘overseers.’

The overseers of the church are likened to shepherds who “care for” (*ποιμένων ποιμαίνῳ*) or “shepherd” a flock of sheep. Just as a shepherd leads, cares for, protects, and provides for his flock, so the overseers are to lead, care for, protect, and provide for Christ’s church. The word translated “shepherds” in this verse is the word from which we have our word ‘pastor’<sup>5</sup> (*poimēn*). Paul is telling the overseers (*episkopos*) of the church to act as pastors of the church in the same way that a shepherd acts as a caretaker of a flock of sheep. But when Paul summoned these same men, he called for the elders (*presbyteros* Acts 20:17). Thus, we see that there are three words that Bible uses synonymously to describe the one office of leadership in the church, overseer (*episkopos*), elder (*presbyteros*), and pastor/shepherd (*poimēn*). Peter uses all three of these words.

<sup>1</sup> So I exhort the elders (*presbyterous*) among you, as a fellow elder... <sup>2</sup> shepherd (*poimante*) the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight (*episkopountes*), not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 1 Peter 5:1-2 (ESV)

**A noble task.** This phrase (*καλὸν ἔργον καλοῦ ἔργου*) can also be translated as “a good work.”<sup>6</sup> This noble task is a good work. This calls to mind that Paul had just written that godly women should adorn themselves with “good works” (2:10). Here he says the same of the men who were to lead the church. That Paul needed to say this may indicate that many did not think serving as overseer was a good and noble pursuit. Perhaps those in the church spreading false teaching were saying this in order to keep themselves in their position. It is good to serve the church Jesus as an overseer. It is good to serve Jesus by caring for his people. The church is the bride of Christ, therefore those who serve as overseers are engaged in loving protection and servant leadership of the people for whom Jesus died. But Paul is not naive. This is a **task**.

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<sup>5</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 193.

It is not about gaining some position of prestige, but rather it is about work, a *work* that requires effort and diligence and determined devotion to Jesus.

## Who Qualifies for the Office?

Who then qualifies for this noble task? Paul now begins a list of 15 qualifications for the office of overseer/elder/pastor. He offers a similar list in Titus 1:5-9. These two lists are not exactly identical, which tells us that Paul is offering a representative and not exhaustive description of key qualities for church leaders. More could be said, but this is sufficient to get the most important ideas across. One commentator has written that this is “more of an inner-office memo than a polished... job description.”<sup>7</sup>

1. **He aspires to and desire the task** (v.1). He must have an *aspiration* and desire to serve in this office/task.

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. **1 Timothy 3:1** (ESV)

The word ‘*aspire*’ means “to strive for with eager desire.”<sup>8</sup> The overseer cannot be forced into this service. He must have a *desire* to serve in this way. The word ‘*aspire*’ means that there ought to be some internal motivation from the heart to serve in this way. Service as an elder/overseer/pastor ought not to come from some outward compulsion, but rather from a sense of inward motivation and calling. There must be an eager desire that flows from inward willingness. As Peter wrote, this service ought to be,

...not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly... **1 Peter 5:2** (ESV)

And the author of Hebrews says that leaders ought to serve,

...with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.  
**Hebrews 13:17** (ESV)

In other words, if your heart is not in it, then you ought not be in it. If you do not wholeheartedly, willingly, and eagerly embrace the call to serve as overseer/elder/pastor, then you ought not to serve in this way. Being an elder is hard and begrudging service is not beneficial service. If there is no eager, willing, aspiring, desire to embrace this calling, then the office is not for you.

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<sup>7</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 193.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

2. **He must be above reproach** (v.2).

Therefore an overseer must be above reproach,  
1 Timothy 3:2 (ESV)

Being “above reproach” does not mean being sinless. If that were the case no one would qualify (except Jesus). This refers to having a blameless way of life. There ought to be nothing in the present conduct or character of this man whereby someone could come and have grounds to make a legitimate charge against him. There’s no habitual secret sin, no shady business dealings, there’s no ongoing deceit, or unresolved conflict. As it stands at the moment, this man’s conscience is clean. There is nothing in his life that may come out that would bring shame on the name of Jesus. An elder/overseer/pastor “*must be above reproach.*”

3. **He must be the husband of one wife** (v.2). The third quality is one this is greatly debated.

Therefore an overseer must be... the husband of one wife...  
1 Timothy 3:2 (ESV)

The Greek phrase literally says, “*a one woman man.*” “The requirement that an overseer... be a ‘one-woman’ man suggests that the overseers and elders were men.”<sup>9</sup> “The Greek is explicit that the overseer is a male who, if married, has a female wife to whom he is fully and exclusively dedicated.”<sup>10</sup>

What does being a “one-woman man” mean? Does it mean that an elder/overseer/pastor must be married? This certainly cannot be true for then neither Timothy<sup>11</sup> and Paul, nor Jesus would qualify. If it did, then Paul would be contradicting where he elsewhere praises the gift of singleness because it allows him to focus more fully on the gospel ministry.<sup>12</sup>

Does it mean that he has only ever been married once? This does not seem right since there are cases where divorce is permitted<sup>13</sup> and in such cases remarriage appears to always be permitted.<sup>14</sup> And if Paul intended to say “only married once,” then there is a much easier way in Greek to make this statement.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 159.

<sup>10</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 195.

<sup>11</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 171.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Cor. 7:32, 35.

<sup>13</sup> Such as in the case of adultery (Mt. 19:7-9) and the abandonment of an unbelieving spouse (1 Cor. 7:12-16).

<sup>14</sup> Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, ed. John S. Feinberg, vol. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), chapter 7, Apple Books.

<sup>15</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 917.

Does this mean that the man has not been remarried after the death of a spouse? This also is most likely not the meaning since remarriage was always permitted after the death of a spouse.

Certainly it does mean that polygamists may not serve as an elder/overseer/pastor. Certainly it also does mean that the quality of faithfulness and sexual fidelity is mandatory. No man may serve as leader of the church who is sexually unfaithful or flirtatious or who does not have his sexual desires under control. The leader of Christ's church must be a person who diligently guards against any kind of situations or relationships that would lead to an open door for an inappropriate conduct. Furthermore, I also suspect that this may mean that a man divorced for non-biblical reasons, whose former spouse is still living, may not serve as elder/overseer/pastor.

4. **He must be sober-minded, self-controlled** (v.2).

Therefore an overseer must be... sober-minded, self-controlled,...

1 Timothy 3:2 (ESV)

These two words (*nephalion*, *sophrone*) are related. The word translated 'sober-minded' could also be translated as 'temperate' or "clear-minded."<sup>16</sup> It literally means, "holding no wine,"<sup>17</sup> but carries the meaning of "behaving in a sober, restrained manner."<sup>18</sup> He allows nothing to cloud his thinking, like alcohol. Closely related to that is the notion of self-control. He is sensible and prudent. He does not allow his emotions to get the better of him and comports himself with sobriety. This is the kind of man who is needed to lead Christ's church.

5. **He must be respectable** (v.2).

The word can also be translated as 'dignified,' or 'modest.' It carries "the sense is 'having characteristics or qualities that evoke admiration...,' so that a person is held in high regard."<sup>19</sup> "The idea seems to be one of not offending against propriety – a person who comports himself in situations so as not to step on toes unnecessarily."<sup>20</sup>

6. **He must be hospitable** (v.2).

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<sup>16</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 173.

<sup>17</sup> Otto Bauernfeind, "Νήφω, Νηφάλιος, Ἐκνήφω," ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 939.

<sup>18</sup> Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 751.

<sup>19</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 196.

<sup>20</sup> John Piper, in the seminar, "Biblical Eldership," which is available at <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/biblical-eldership-session-1> accessed 1 Feb. 2020.

"The word *philoxenos* (found again in Titus 1:8; 1 Peter 4:9) literally means 'loving strangers.'"<sup>21</sup> An elder must be a man who easily gives attention to newcomers. He is not offended by strangers, but rather he heartily welcomes them. This does not necessarily mean that this person must be an extrovert, but rather that he desires to see that strangers are welcomed. This probably means that an elder is willing to have guests into his home and allow his home to be a place of ministry, for example he may host a LIFE group.

7. **He must be able to teach** (v.2).

This does not mean that all elders must be gifted in public speaking, for Paul indicates that some elders primarily focus on preaching and teaching while others apparently do not.

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

1 Timothy 5:17 (ESV).

It seems from this verse, that there are some elders who bear the primary responsibility for preaching and teaching. However, *all* elders must be **able** to teach. All elders must be able to explain biblical doctrine rightly, help people understand what God's word means, and discern what it does not mean.

He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

Titus 1:9 (ESV)

This requirement is not that each elder has to be a Billy Graham. However, he must be instructed in God's word, he must hold it firmly as he was taught, and he must be able to then clearly explain biblical doctrine and when the occasion requires, he must be able to correct those who wrongly teaching God's word.

Verses 2 spoke of the positive requirements, but now Paul lists four negative characteristics, or things that disqualify.

8. **He must not be a drunkard** (v.3).

The Greek word "*paroinos* (literally, "beside wine"), 'lingering with the cup.'"<sup>22</sup> An elder must not be a man who "lingers long over wine." He must not be one who gives in to the

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<sup>21</sup> Ralph Earle, "1 Timothy," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 364.

<sup>22</sup> Ralph Earle, "1 Timothy," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 364.

temptation of drinking too much alcohol. He always has his head about him. He does not give in to drink such that his judgment is impaired.

9. **He must not be violent** (v.3).

An elder of Jesus church must not be a violent or hot-tempered man. He must have his anger under control. He must not be a quick-tempered man (Titus 1:7) who lashes out either physically or verbally. An elder is a man who is known for being gentle, rather than belligerent. His coworkers and family members would be able to speak into this issue of temper. Violence is absent and gentleness is present within the demeanor of an elder of the church.

10. **He must be gentle** (v.3).

Elders are required to do all they do with gentleness. They must still lead, teach, instruct, exhort, and correct and refute sound doctrine (Tit 1:9), but they must do so with with gentleness

<sup>15</sup> but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,  
1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)

“Paul is calling for a magnanimity that rules out quick-tempered, mercurial reactions. But he by no means rules out the leadership steel and strategies that may be necessary to “fight the good fight of the faith” (6:12) and to ‘reprove, rebuke, and exhort’ (2 Tim 4:2 ESV). ‘These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority’ (Titus 2:15). ‘Evenhanded’ and ‘measured’ convey the sense.”<sup>23</sup>

11. **He must not be quarrelsome** (v.3).

We’ve already seen Paul mention this. The man who qualifies as an elder is not who enjoys getting into arguments. An overseer ought to be patient and careful with his words. He is very familiar with the Proverbs.

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.  
Proverbs 15:1 (ESV)

An elder of God’s church not only has his emotions under control, but he always has his words under control. He avoids acidic, inflammatory words and instead speaks peaceful

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<sup>23</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 197.

words. He does not enjoy agitating people and seeing them get fired up. Rather he avoids pugnacious words and aims at diffusing explosive confrontations.

12. **He must not be a lover of money** (v.3).

The elder with whom Christ is pleased is one who is free from the *love of money*. Greed<sup>24</sup> has no place in the heart of Christ's overseer. The love of money has been the downfall of many "senior pastors" who have no accountability concerning money. Money is not the source of supply of our needs. God is. Therefore, we must never lean on money, but rather lean upon the Lord "who alone has the riches to supply our need" (Phil. 4:19).

13. **He must manage his own household well, with dignity** (v.4).

<sup>4</sup> He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, <sup>5</sup> for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? 1 Timothy 3:4-5 (ESV)

For Paul, home management is the testing ground for church management. If an elder is unable to manage his own home well, then similarly he will be unable to manage God's church well? If he cannot teach his children to obey his rules, then how will he teach God's people to obey God's rules?

I do not think this means that his children must be perfect, but it must mean that they are at least well behaved and respectful. I think Paul's aim is at whether this man practices what he preaches. Does he himself follow and obey God's word at home? If he does, then his children will follow his lead. Just as the husband is the spiritual leader in the home, so the elder is the spiritual leader in Christ's church. **Elders are like spiritual fathers to the church.** Most children emulate the behavior of the father's. So one metric of evaluation of whether or not an elder truly embraces God's word is whether or not he does so at home. Observing the home-life is one way of accessing his spiritual leadership.

14. **He must not be a recent convert** (v.6). Paul warns against putting someone too quickly into the office of elder.

He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.  
1 Timothy 3:6 (ESV)

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<sup>24</sup> Titus 1:7.

The Greek word for 'recent convert' is *neophyton*. Elders must not be neophytes. The word literally means "newly planted."<sup>25</sup> Elders must not be new believers or else they likely will be attacked by the devil by his causing them to be puffed up with pride and conceit. Thus, whoever is appointed as an elder needs to have been a believer long enough to know that his ability to serve in this role of responsibility comes from "the strength the Lord provides"<sup>26</sup> and not from himself. Evidently, the longer you know the Lord, the more humble we ought to become and the more vigilant we ought to be to fight against the subtleties of pride entering our spiritual lives.

15. **He must be well thought of by outsiders** (v.7). Finally, the elder/overseer/pastor must be well thought of by outsiders.

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 3:7 (ESV)

Outsiders means non-believers. The name of Jesus is at stake in leaders we appoint. Jesus instructed us to "let our light so shine before others that they would see our good works and give glory to God in heaven" (Mt. 5:16). An elder must be a person who so lives the Christian life that even unbelievers have only good to say about him.

In other words, does the elder's coworkers and neighbors see Christ-like character in him? If we were to talk to your coworkers and ask for a character reference, what would they say? Would they say, "Yes, he is a faithful man. He keeps his word. He's a hard worker. He's honest. He doesn't lie. He is trustworthy. He is not a hypocrite. He is an exemplary man at work, so I'm sure he will be an exemplary man at church?"

## Conclusion

As we come to the end of this passage, we should notice something striking. Paul does not primarily focus on an elder's talents, charisma, education, or leadership style. Instead, he focuses on his character. The qualifications for overseers are overwhelmingly moral and spiritual. Why? Because Christ cares deeply about how His church is led.

The office of overseer is indeed a noble task, but it is not a platform for personal ambition. It is a calling to humble service. It is a stewardship entrusted by Christ Himself. The men who serve as elders are called to shepherd the flock that Christ purchased with His own blood. They are called to lead, teach, protect, encourage, and care for God's people while living lives worthy of imitation.

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<sup>25</sup> Ralph Earle, "1 Timothy," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 365.

<sup>26</sup> 1 Peter 4:11.

For those men among us who aspire to this office, let this passage serve both as an encouragement and a sober warning. Aspire to the work, but do not aspire merely to the title. Pursue these qualifications. Cultivate holiness. Lead your families well. Grow in your knowledge of God's Word. Seek Christ-like humility. The church does not need perfect men, but it does need godly men who are growing in grace and whose lives demonstrate the transforming power of the gospel.

And for the congregation, this passage also speaks to us. We should *pray that God would raise up qualified elders among us*. We should encourage men who display these qualities. We should evaluate church leaders according to God's standards rather than worldly standards. The world looks for charisma, influence, and success. God looks for holiness, faithfulness, humility, and sound doctrine.

As a church, we must remember that *healthy churches do not happen by accident*. They are built as God's people submit themselves to God's Word and as godly leaders faithfully shepherd the flock entrusted to them. Therefore, let us pray for our elders. Let us support them. Let us hold them accountable to these biblical standards. And let us strive together to be the kind of church that reflects the character of Christ.

Most importantly, this passage should lift our eyes beyond every earthly shepherd to the One Shepherd who never fails. No elder perfectly fulfills these qualifications. Every pastor, every overseer, every church leader falls short. But there is One who is perfectly above reproach. One who was perfectly faithful. One who was never quarrelsome, never greedy, never prideful, and never failed in His care for God's people. His name is Jesus Christ.

*He is the Chief Shepherd of the church*. He laid down His life for His sheep. He rose again in victory. He even now rules His church with wisdom, holiness, and perfect love. Earthly elders are called to reflect Him because He alone is the perfect Overseer of our souls.

So *let us look to Christ*. Let us trust Christ. Let us follow Christ. And may He continue to raise up faithful shepherds who will lead His people until the day when the Chief Shepherd appears and we stand before Him together in glory.

Amen.

## Discussion Questions

1. Paul calls the office of overseer a "noble task" (v. 1). Why do you think Paul emphasizes that this work is noble? How does this challenge common views of leadership both inside and outside the church?
2. The sermon highlighted that the terms elder, overseer, and pastor refer to the same office. How does understanding these terms help clarify the biblical role of church leadership?
3. Why do you think Paul focuses so heavily on character qualifications rather than gifting, education, or leadership ability? What does this teach us about God's priorities for church leaders?
4. The first major qualification is being "above reproach." What does this mean practically? How is being above reproach different from being sinless?
5. Several qualifications relate to self-control, gentleness, and avoiding quarrels. Why are these qualities especially important for those who lead Christ's church?
6. Paul teaches that an overseer must manage his household well. Why is faithfulness in the home an important indicator of readiness for spiritual leadership in the church?
7. The sermon emphasized that elders must be able to teach sound doctrine and refute error. Why is doctrinal faithfulness essential to the health and protection of the local church?
8. Which of the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 do you think is most neglected in the modern church? Why?
9. How can church members encourage, support, and pray for their elders while also holding them accountable to the biblical standards found in this passage?
10. The sermon concluded by pointing us to Christ as the perfect Shepherd and Overseer. Which qualification of an elder do you see perfectly fulfilled in Jesus, and how does that deepen your appreciation for Him?
11. Whether or not you are called to serve as an elder, which of these character qualities does God want to strengthen in your life right now? What practical step can you take this week to pursue growth in that area?