

BEING A PROPER PERSON IN LIFE TO CARE FOR THE CHURCH IN GOD'S ADMINISTRATION

(Friday—First Morning Session)

Message Four The Qualifications of the Elders

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 3:1-7

- 1 Tim 3:1 Faithful is the word: If anyone aspires to the overseership, he desires a good work.
1 Tim 3:2 The overseer then must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, of a sober mind, orderly, hospitable, apt to teach;
1 Tim 3:3 Not an excessive drinker; not a striker, but gentle; not contentious; not fond of money;
1 Tim 3:4 One who manages well his own house, having *his* children in subjection with all gravity
1 Tim 3:5 (But if one does not know how to manage his own house, how will he care for the church of God?);
1 Tim 3:6 Not a new convert, lest being blinded with pride he fall into the judgment *suffered* by the devil.
1 Tim 3:7 And he also must have a good testimony from those outside, that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

I. The qualifications of an elder in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 are actually a revelation of what the indwelling Christ as the resurrection life can do in us—cf. 1:4, 16; 3:16; 6:12, 19:

- 1 Tim 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.
1 Tim 1:16 But because of this I was shown mercy, that in me, the foremost, Jesus Christ might display all His long-suffering for a pattern to those who are to believe on Him unto eternal life.
1 Tim 3:16 And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.
1 Tim 6:12 Fight the good fight of the faith; lay hold on the eternal life, to which you were called and have confessed the good confession before many witnesses.
1 Tim 6:19 Laying away for themselves a good foundation as a treasure for the future, that they may lay hold on that which is really life.

A. This is like the constitution of the kingdom in Matthew 5—7, which not only indicates what the kingdom requires but also proves and testifies how much the resurrection life can do in us.

- Matt 5:1 And when He saw the crowds, He went up to the mountain. And after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.
Matt 5:2 And opening His mouth, He taught them, saying,
Matt 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.
Matt 5:4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
Matt 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
Matt 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
Matt 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.
Matt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
Matt 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.
Matt 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.
Matt 5:11 Blessed are you when they reproach and persecute you, and while speaking lies, say every evil thing against you because of Me.
Matt 5:12 Rejoice and exult, for your reward is great in the heavens; for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
Matt 5:13 You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt has become tasteless, with what shall it be salted? It is no longer good for anything except to be cast out and trampled underfoot by men.
Matt 5:14 You are the light of the world. It is impossible for a city situated upon a mountain to be hidden.
Matt 5:15 Nor do *men* light a lamp and place it under the bushel, but on the lampstand; and it shines to all who are in the house.
Matt 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in the heavens.

- Matt 5:17** Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish, but to fulfill.
- Matt 5:18** For truly I say to you, Until heaven and earth pass away, one iota or one serif shall by no means pass away from the law until all come to pass.
- Matt 5:19** Therefore whoever annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of the heavens; but whoever practices and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of the heavens.
- Matt 5:20** For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.
- Matt 5:21** You have heard that it was said to the ancients, "You shall not murder, and whoever murders shall be liable to the judgment."
- Matt 5:22** But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, Raca, shall be liable to *the judgment of the Sanhedrin*; and whoever says, Moreh, shall be liable to the Gehenna of fire.
- Matt 5:23** Therefore if you are offering your gift at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you,
- Matt 5:24** Leave your gift there before the altar, and first go and be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.
- Matt 5:25** Be well disposed quickly toward your opponent at law, while you are with him on the way, lest the opponent deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.
- Matt 5:26** Truly I say to you, You shall by no means come out from there until you pay the last quadrans.
- Matt 5:27** You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery."
- Matt 5:28** But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman in order to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
- Matt 5:29** So if your right eye stumbles you, pluck it out and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish than for your whole body to be cast into Gehenna.
- Matt 5:30** And if your right hand stumbles you, cut it off and cast *it* from you, for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish than for your whole body to pass away into Gehenna.
- Matt 5:31** And it was said, Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.
- Matt 5:32** But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries her who has been divorced commits adultery.
- Matt 5:33** Again, you have heard that it was said to the ancients, "You shall not break an oath, but you shall render to the Lord your oaths."
- Matt 5:34** But I tell you not to swear at all; neither by heaven, because it is the throne of God;
- Matt 5:35** Nor by the earth, because it is the footstool of His feet; nor unto Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King;
- Matt 5:36** Neither shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black.
- Matt 5:37** But let your word be, Yes, yes; No, no; for anything more than these is of the evil one.
- Matt 5:38** You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."
- Matt 5:39** But I tell you not to resist him who is evil; rather whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.
- Matt 5:40** And to him who wishes to sue you and take your tunic, yield to him your cloak also;
- Matt 5:41** And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.
- Matt 5:42** To him who asks of you, give; and from him who wants to borrow from you, do not turn away.
- Matt 5:43** You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy."
- Matt 5:44** But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you,
- Matt 5:45** So that you may become sons of your Father who is in the heavens, because He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust.
- Matt 5:46** For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?
- Matt 5:47** And if you greet only your brothers, what better thing are you doing? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?
- Matt 5:48** You therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.
- Matt 6:1** But take care not to do your righteousness before men in order to be gazed at by them; otherwise, you have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens.

- Matt 6:2 Therefore when you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be glorified by men. Truly I say to you, They have their reward in full.
- Matt 6:3 But you, when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,
- Matt 6:4 So that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.
- Matt 6:5 And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners, so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, They have their reward in full.
- Matt 6:6 But you, when you pray, enter into your private room, and shut your door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.
- Matt 6:7 And in praying do not babble empty words as the Gentiles do; for they suppose that in their multiplicity of words they will be heard.
- Matt 6:8 Therefore do not be like them, for your Father knows the things that you have need of before you ask Him.
- Matt 6:9 You then pray in this way: Our Father who is in the heavens, Your name be sanctified;
- Matt 6:10 Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, *so* also on earth.
- Matt 6:11 Give us today our daily bread.
- Matt 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
- Matt 6:13 And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.
- Matt 6:14 For if you forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you also;
- Matt 6:15 But if you do not forgive men their offenses, neither will your Father forgive your offenses.
- Matt 6:16 And when you fast, do not be like the sullen-faced hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so that they may appear to men to be fasting. Truly I say to you, They have their reward in full.
- Matt 6:17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,
- Matt 6:18 So that you may not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.
- Matt 6:19 Do not store up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves dig through and steal.
- Matt 6:20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not dig through nor steal.
- Matt 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
- Matt 6:22 The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light;
- Matt 6:23 But if your eye is evil, your whole body will be dark. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!
- Matt 6:24 No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.
- Matt 6:25 Because of this, I say to you, Do not be anxious for your life, what you should eat or what you should drink; nor for your body, what you should put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body than clothing?
- Matt 6:26 Look at the birds of heaven. They do not sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father nourishes them. Are you not of more value than they?
- Matt 6:27 Who among you by being anxious can add one cubit to his stature?
- Matt 6:28 And why are you anxious concerning clothing? Consider well the lilies of the field, how they grow. They do not toil, neither do they spin *thread*.
- Matt 6:29 But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these.
- Matt 6:30 And if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is *here* today and tomorrow is cast into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, you of little faith?
- Matt 6:31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, With what shall we be clothed?
- Matt 6:32 For all these things the Gentiles are anxiously seeking. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.
- Matt 6:33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
- Matt 6:34 Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself; sufficient for the day is its *own* evil.
- Matt 7:1 Do not judge, that you be not judged.
- Matt 7:2 For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you.

- Matt 7:3 And why do you look at the splinter which is in your brother's eye, but the beam in your eye you do not consider?
- Matt 7:4 Or how can you say to your brother, Let me remove the splinter from your eye, and behold, the beam is in your eye?
- Matt 7:5 Hypocrite, first remove the beam from your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's eye.
- Matt 7:6 Do not give that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the hogs, lest they trample them with their feet, and turn and tear you.
- Matt 7:7 Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you.
- Matt 7:8 For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened.
- Matt 7:9 Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks him for a loaf, will give him a stone?
- Matt 7:10 Or also when he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?
- Matt 7:11 If you then being evil know *how* to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in the heavens give good things to those who ask Him!
- Matt 7:12 Therefore all that you wish men would do to you, so also you do to them; for this is the law and the prophets.
- Matt 7:13 Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it.
- Matt 7:14 Because narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it.
- Matt 7:15 Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.
- Matt 7:16 By their fruits you will recognize them. Do *men* gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?
- Matt 7:17 Even so every good tree produces good fruit, but the corrupt tree produces bad fruit.
- Matt 7:18 A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, neither can a corrupt tree produce good fruit.
- Matt 7:19 Every tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire.
- Matt 7:20 So then, by their fruits you will recognize them.
- Matt 7:21 Not every one who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he who does the will of My Father who is in the heavens.
- Matt 7:22 Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, *was it* not in Your name *that* we prophesied, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name did many works of power?
- Matt 7:23 And then I will declare to them: I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.
- Matt 7:24 Every one therefore who hears these words of Mine and does them shall be likened to a prudent man who built his house upon the rock.
- Matt 7:25 And the rain descended, and the rivers came, and the winds blew, and they beat against that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.
- Matt 7:26 And every one who hears these words of Mine and does not do them shall be likened to a foolish man who built his house upon the sand.
- Matt 7:27 And the rain descended, and the rivers came, and the winds blew, and they dashed against that house; and it fell, and its fall was great.
- Matt 7:28 And when Jesus finished these words, the crowds were astounded at His teaching,
- Matt 7:29 For He taught them as One having authority and not like their scribes.
- B. Like the qualifications of an elder, the requirements of the kingdom of the heavens are the highest demand, and the divine life of the Father, the resurrection life, is the highest supply to meet that demand; this demand opens up our inner being, showing us that we are able to attain to such a high level and to have such a high living—Matt. 5:48.
- Matt 5:48 You therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.
- C. Our flesh, old man, and natural life have been crucified on the cross, and it is now Christ who lives in us; we need to cooperate with Him by having a desire and a willingness and by praying much—Gal. 2:20; Phil. 2:13.
- Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and *it is* no longer I *who* live, but *it is* Christ *who* lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the *faith* of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
- Phil 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for *His* good pleasure.

II. “Faithful is the word: If anyone aspires to the overseership, he desires a good work”—1 Tim. 3:1:

A. An overseer in a local church is an elder; *elder* denotes a person of maturity, and *overseer* denotes the function of an elder—Acts 20:17, 28:

Acts **20:17** And from Miletus he sent *word* to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

Acts **20:28** Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.

1. To be an elder is not a matter of ability or gift but a matter of life, a matter of what we are—Heb. 13:7.

Heb **13:7** Remember the ones leading you, who have spoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their manner of life, imitate their faith.

2. Being an elder is a matter of our character, disposition, conduct, and being.

3. Aspiration to be an overseer, an elder, with a pure motive differs from ambition with an impure motive.

B. The elders must exercise their spirit to be one with the Lord in watching over the saints’ souls (v. 17); our Lord, as the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls, shepherds us by caring for the welfare of our inner being and by exercising His oversight over the condition of our real person (1 Pet. 2:25).

Heb **13:17** Obey the ones leading you and submit to *them*, for they watch over your souls as those who will render an account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning; for this would be unprofitable to you.

1 Pet **2:25** For you were like sheep being led astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

III. “The overseer then must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, of a sober mind, orderly, hospitable, apt to teach”—1 Tim. 3:2:

A. To be without reproach does not mean to be perfect or blameless in the eyes of God; rather, it means to be irreproachable in the eyes of man.

B. To be the husband of one wife implies the restraining of the flesh, which is highly required of an elder; it keeps an elder in a simple and pure married life, free from the tangle of a complicated and confused marriage.

C. The word *temperate* denotes “moderate, not going to extremes, balanced, and self-controlled.”

D. To have a sober mind means to be not only keen but also discreet in the understanding of matters; to be of a sober mind means to think clearly and to have a pure and clear discernment—cf. Eph. 4:23:

Eph **4:23** And *that* you be renewed in the spirit of your mind

1. In order to receive light from the Word of God, our mind must be pure, clean, and straight, without any peculiar thinking.

2. In order to be an overseer in a local church, a brother needs such a mind so that he can accurately understand the situation of the church and of the individual saints.

3. The overseers’ thinking must be practical, based in reality, pure, clean, and straight, because they are responsible for keeping strange, polluted, and damaging things out of the church—Acts 20:28.

Acts **20:28** Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.

E. To be orderly is to be decorous, to have behavior that always fits the situation:

1. This means that the leading ones work together with God by a life (not by any gift) that is all-sufficient and all-mature.
2. Such a life is able to fit all situations, that is, able to endure any kind of treatment, to accept any kind of environment, to work in any kind of condition, and to take any kind of opportunity, for the carrying out of the leading ones' ministry, the ministry of reconciliation—2 Cor. 5:18—6:1.
 - 2 Cor 5:18 But all things are out from God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation;
 - 2 Cor 5:19 Namely, that God in Christ was reconciling the world to Himself, not accounting their offenses to them, and has put in us the word of reconciliation.
 - 2 Cor 5:20 On behalf of Christ then we are ambassadors, as God entreats *you* through us; we beseech *you* on behalf of Christ, Be reconciled to God.
 - 2 Cor 5:21 Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
 - 2 Cor 6:1 And working together with *Him*, we also entreat you not to receive the grace of God in vain;

F. To be hospitable requires love, care for people, and endurance:

1. The elders must realize that most Christians are weak—weak in their soul and even weaker in their spirit; therefore, the elders need to help the saints find rest by listening to their stories.
2. Just as an on-call physician must be available to provide medical care at any time, an elder must always be available to help the saints.
3. Being hospitable is not a matter of ability but of willingness to give and even be troubled, bothered, and exhausted in order to take care of others—cf. Psa. 51:12.
 - Psa 51:12 Restore to me the gladness of Your salvation, And sustain me with a willing spirit.
4. In a local church, besides those who are disorderly and need admonishing, those who are little-souled and need consoling, and those who are weak and need sustaining, all the members may be a problem in some way and need us to be long-suffering toward them—1 Thes. 5:14.
 - 1 Thes 5:14 And we exhort you, brothers, Admonish the disorderly, console the fainthearted, sustain the weak, be long-suffering toward all.

G. An elder must be apt to teach; the word *apt* means “tending, inclined, likely”:

1. Teaching here is similar to parents' teaching of their children.
2. An elder must be apt to render this kind of home teaching to the members of a local church.
3. An elder's gift or ability to teach is of secondary importance; primarily, he must be concerned for the saints' learning the truth and must build up a willingness and a habit to teach the saints.

IV. “Not an excessive drinker; not a striker, but gentle; not contentious; not fond of money”—1 Tim. 3:3:

- A. It is quite difficult for people to control themselves once they have been drinking; therefore, in order to control ourselves, it is best not to drink at all.
- B. Not being a striker means that an elder has a strong restraining of his temper.
- C. Being gentle means that an elder is yielding, approachable, mild, reasonable, and considerate in dealing with others, without strictness—cf. Phil. 4:5.
 - Phil 4:5 Let your forbearance be known to all men. The Lord is near.
- D. Not being contentious means that an elder must not be quarrelsome but peaceable.
- E. An elder must not be fond of money; money is a test to all men, and an elder must be pure in matters related to money, especially since the church fund is under the elders' management—Acts 11:30; cf. John 12:4-6; 2 Kings 5:14-27.
 - Acts 11:30 Which also they did, sending *it* to the elders through the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

- John 12:4 But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was about to betray Him, said,
 John 12:5 Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?
 John 12:6 But he said this not because it mattered to him concerning the poor, but because he was a thief, and holding the purse, carried off what was put into *it*.
- 2 Kings 5:14 So he went down and dipped in the Jordan seven times according to the word of the man of God. And his flesh was restored to be like the flesh of a little boy, and he was clean.
 2 Kings 5:15 And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came and stood before him and said, Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except with Israel. And now, please accept a present from your servant.
 2 Kings 5:16 But he said, As Jehovah lives, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing. And Naaman urged him to take it, but he refused.
 2 Kings 5:17 And Naaman said, Then if not, please let your servant be given two mule-loads of earth, for your servant will no more offer burnt offerings and sacrifices to other gods, but to Jehovah only.
 2 Kings 5:18 In this matter may Jehovah pardon your servant: When my master goes into the house of Rimmon to bow down there and leans on my arm, and I bow down in the house of Rimmon, when I bow down in the house of Rimmon, may Jehovah pardon your servant in this matter.
 2 Kings 5:19 And he said to him, Go in peace. And when he had gone from him a little way,
 2 Kings 5:20 Gehazi, the attendant of Elisha the man of God said, Now my master has spared Naaman this Syrian by not receiving from his hand that which he brought. As Jehovah lives, I will run after him and take something from him.
 2 Kings 5:21 So Gehazi pursued Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running after him, he alighted from the chariot to meet him and said, Is all well?
 2 Kings 5:22 And he said, All is well. My master has sent me, saying, Now at this moment two young men from among the sons of the prophets have come to me from the hill country of Ephraim; please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothes.
 2 Kings 5:23 And Naaman said, Please take two talents. And he urged him and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothes, and gave them to two of his attendants; and they carried them before him.
 2 Kings 5:24 And when he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and deposited them in the house. And he sent the men away, and they departed.
 2 Kings 5:25 And he went in and stood before his master. And Elisha said to him, Where have you come from, Gehazi? And he said, Your servant has not gone anywhere.
 2 Kings 5:26 And he said to him, Did not my heart go with you when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Is it a time to receive silver and to receive clothing and olive groves and vineyards and sheep and oxen and male servants and female servants?
 2 Kings 5:27 Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to you and to your seed forever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

V. “One who manages well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity (but if one does not know how to manage his own house, how will he care for the church of God?)”—1 Tim. 3:4-5:

- A. A father’s leadership in his family should not be based on his ruling with authority but should instead be based on the pattern of his daily living.
- B. God’s ordained principle is that a father must live a life that is a pattern, an example, to his children; nevertheless, we must realize that the way our children turn out ultimately depends on the Lord’s mercy.
- C. Therefore, we must do our duty to live a proper life as an example to our children, but we should not be discouraged or proud because of how our children turn out; Jacob and Esau were twins, but Romans 9:10-13 shows that their destiny depended on God’s selection.
 Rom 9:10 And not only *so*, but Rebecca also, having conceived by one, Isaac our father,
 Rom 9:11 Though *the children* had not yet been born nor had done anything good or bad (that the purpose of God according to selection might remain, not of works but of Him who calls),
 Rom 9:12 It was said to her, "The greater shall serve the less";
 Rom 9:13 As it is written, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."
- D. The best and most proper way to be a parent is to live as an example to our children and pray for the Lord’s mercy.

- E. If our living establishes a proper standard, we are not liable if our children behave badly; however, if we do not live as a pattern, our children’s bad behavior is our responsibility.
- F. In order to be a good example, we must love the Lord and His Word, deal with sins, hate the self, and learn the lessons of the cross; this will be an example not only to our children but also to all the saints.
- G. We must reject the concept that the elders “run” the church; even the Lord Jesus took the way of setting up an example for us to follow—John 13:15; Matt. 11:29; 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Pet. 2:21.

John 13:15 For I have given you an example so that you also may do even as I have done to you.

Matt 11:29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

1 Cor 11:1 Be imitators of me, as I also am of Christ.

1 Pet 2:21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered on your behalf, leaving you a model so that you may follow in His steps;

VI. “Not a new convert, lest being blinded with pride he fall into the judgment suffered by the devil”—1 Tim. 3:6:

- A. The Greek word rendered “blinded” literally means “beclouded with smoke”; pride here is likened to smoke that beclouds the mind, making it blind, besotted with the self-conceit of pride.
- B. Pride makes us blind, and if an elder becomes proud, he will suffer the same judgment as the devil, who was proud of his high position—Ezek. 28:13-19; Isa. 14:12-15; Jude 9.
 - Ezek 28:13 You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, diamond, chrysolite, onyx, jasper, sapphire, carbuncle, and emerald, with gold. The workmanship of your tambourines and your pipes was prepared with you on the day that you were created.
 - Ezek 28:14 You were the anointed cherub who covered the Ark; indeed I set you, so that you were upon the holy mountain of God; you walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.
 - Ezek 28:15 You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you.
 - Ezek 28:16 By the abundance of your trading they filled your midst with violence, and you sinned. So I cast you out as profane from the mountain of God, and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.
 - Ezek 28:17 Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your brightness. I cast you to the ground; I presented you before kings that they may look at you.
 - Ezek 28:18 By the multitude of your iniquities in the unrighteousness of your trading you have profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I sent forth fire from your midst; it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all those who look at you.
 - Ezek 28:19 All who know you among the peoples are astonished at you. You have become a source of terror, and you will be no more forever.
 - Isa 14:12 How you have fallen from heaven, O Daystar, son of the dawn! How you have been hewn down to earth, You who made nations fall prostrate!
 - Isa 14:13 But you, you said in your heart: I will ascend to heaven; Above the stars of God I will exalt my throne. And I will sit upon the mount of assembly In the uttermost parts of the north.
 - Isa 14:14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.
 - Isa 14:15 But you will be brought down to Sheol, To the uttermost parts of the pit.
 - Jude 9 But Michael the archangel, when he contended with the devil and disputed concerning the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a reviling judgment against *him* but said, The Lord rebuke you.
- C. Those who are taking the lead in the churches must be in fear and trembling, praying that the Lord will preserve them from any kind of pride.

VII. “And he also must have a good testimony from those outside, that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil”—1 Tim. 3:7:

- A. To have a good testimony is to have a walk and living that issue from living out Christ and expressing Christ and are appreciated and praised by others.

- B. An elder must be right with himself, with his family, with the church, and with those outside—the society; and, according to the context, an elder must be right in intention, in motive, in character, in attitude, in word, and in deed.
- C. Falling into the judgment suffered by the devil is due to the pride of the elder himself; falling into the snare of the devil is occasioned by the reproach of the outsiders; an elder should be alert not to be proud, on the one hand, and not to be reproachable, on the other, that he may avoid the devil’s entanglement.
- D. The elders must pray, “Lord, deliver me from any temptation, and keep me from the evil one and evil things”; Paul’s word reveals that there is a battle regarding the eldership because the devil seeks to ruin every elder.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE QUALIFICATIONS IN 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7 ACTUALLY BEING A REVELATION OF WHAT THE RESURRECTION LIFE OF THE INDWELLING CHRIST CAN DO IN US

The self-control that is required of an overseer is altogether a matter of life. As elders we must live a life that has been dealt with by the cross of Christ so that the resurrection power will enable us to exercise such self-control. We should not say that no one can meet these requirements. If no one could make it, the apostle Paul would not have written it, nor would it be included in the Bible. These qualifications are not a kind of law or commandment; instead, they show us what the Lord can do within us. This is like the constitution of the kingdom in Matthew 5—7, which not only indicates what the kingdom requires but also proves and testifies how much the resurrection life can do within us. We believe God’s living Word. Whatever the Lord says will come to pass. Hence, we need to trust in His Word, receive it, and pray. We should not be disappointed by our apparent shortcomings. Instead, we should be encouraged that because the Word includes these qualifications, the resurrection life will produce them in us.

We should not isolate 1 Timothy 3:1-7 from the rest of the Epistle, which reveals the eternal life, God’s economy, which is His dispensing, and the manifestation of God in the flesh (6:12, 19; 1:4; 3:16). Thus, 1 Timothy 3:1-7 is actually a revelation of how much the resurrection life of the indwelling Christ can do in us. By ourselves we cannot meet these requirements, but the indwelling Christ can certainly meet them. However, we must be willing to cooperate with Him. Our flesh, old man, and natural life have been crucified on the cross, and it is now Christ who lives in us (Gal. 2:20). We need to cooperate with Him by having a desire and a willingness and by praying much. If we wait on the Lord, He will work out all these things from within us. (*Basic Principles concerning the Eldership*, pp. 47-48)

THE ELDERSHIP DEPENDING NOT MAINLY ON ABILITY OR GIFT BUT ON LIFE

We must note that in the writings of both Paul and Peter very little is said concerning the abilities of the elders. First Timothy 3:2 says that an elder must be “apt to teach,” yet the word *apt* does not indicate ability but habit. Parents may not have much ability in teaching, but they should nevertheless be apt to teach their children at home. The elders similarly must be apt to care for the saints’ learning. According to Paul’s word in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, eldership is not a matter of gift or ability but a matter of life. This does not mean that the elders can be without ability. However, throughout church history and even in our recent past, the problems in the eldership have been not mainly matters of ability or gift but matters of life.

Within a few minutes of the start of a basketball game, it is possible to assess the players’ abilities. Similarly, it is possible to know a person’s spiritual abilities or gifts in a short time. To know a brother’s eloquence, we only have to listen to him speak for a few minutes. However, to know a person in life takes time. In Paul’s later ministry he did not appoint elders immediately after

establishing a church but left this matter to his co-workers (Titus 1:5). Perhaps this was because he found that it was unsafe to appoint a brother to be an elder before the necessary time had passed to know him in life.

It takes more than a few months to truly know a person because it takes time for a person's real condition in life to be exposed. Someone may pretend to be patient, humble, and not ambitious for a few months, but it is difficult to pretend for more than a year. Within a year a person's condition in life will be exposed through his manner and conduct. It is not safe or proper to decide quickly whether a brother is an elder. We must allow a longer time to see the brother's real situation in life. According to our experience, to know someone in life requires at least a year of regular contact.

To know a person, we need not only time but also different circumstances and situations. If within a year there has not been a situation that tempts a brother's ambition, it may remain hidden until such a situation arises. Time alone does not expose people adequately. Time plus environments expose a person. For this reason, we should wait at least a year before we decide whether a brother is an elder. It is better if we can wait even longer.

Companies, schools, hospitals, and other organizations care much for the abilities of their workers, but Paul does not mention anything concerning gifts or ability among the many qualifications of the elders he lists. The problems in the eldership are not related to ability, skill, or gift but are matters of life. What we can do does not mean much; instead, we should consider what we are. Only what we are in life counts for the eldership. To be an elder is not a matter of ability or gift but a matter of life, a matter of what we are.

AN ELDER BEING AN OVERSEER

Paul does not use the word *elder* in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Instead, he uses the word *overseer*, which in Greek is *episkopos*. This word is sometimes translated "bishop." However, the word *bishop* has been misused to describe a hierarchical position. An elder is an overseer (Acts 20:17, 28). Humanly speaking, to be such an overseer requires some ability, but Paul instead emphasizes character, disposition, conduct, and being. In order to be an overseer in the church, a brother must be the right kind of person, not in what he can do but in what he is. This means that a brother must be right in life before he can be a proper overseer in the church.

According to human history and our own experiences, we know that in most situations what we can or cannot do does not mean as much as what we are or are not. The condition of people's family life is not determined by their ability as much as by their character, disposition, conduct, and being. We should not be concerned about how much we can or cannot do. We should not be proud of our ability, nor should we be disappointed in our inability. We need only to be the right person in disposition, character, conduct, and being.

THE HOLY ASPIRATION TO THE OVERSEERSHIP

In 1 Timothy 3:1 Paul writes, "Faithful is the word: If anyone aspires to the overseership, he desires a good work." To aspire does not mean to be ambitious. A man can aspire to be a good father, but this does not mean that he is ambitious. The church needs many brothers to aspire to the overseership. Not every brother with this aspiration will become an elder, but the church will have a wonderful future.

The elders need to speak to the brothers in their localities to stir up their aspiration to be elders. If an elder is afraid of others' aspiration, this may indicate that he is trying to hold on to his personal kingdom. If we do not want our own kingdom, we will stir up the aspiration in others to be elders. We will like to see many in the younger generation aspiring to be elders. Such aspiration is very good, but we condemn ambition. To have the ambition to be a great leader is devilish (cf. Isa. 14:12-15).

Paul begins 1 Timothy 3:1 by writing, "Faithful is the word." This probably indicates that the second part of the verse was a well-known saying among the churches at that time, and Paul was

confirming the saying. Ambition and competition should be condemned, but we need to stir up in the saints a holy aspiration for the Lord's interests and the spreading of the church. Because we desire that the churches would spread, and every church needs elders, many young brothers should pray, "Lord, if it is Your will, I would like to be one of the elders to take care of Your testimony in a locality." This is not ambition. If circumstances never allow a brother to be an elder, he should not be dissatisfied. There should be no ambition or competition but a proper, holy aspiration. (*Basic Principles concerning the Eldership*, pp. 38-40)