

“Competent Commanders” (1 Tim. 3:1-7)

1. Motivation (1)

- a. Privileged Position: “overseer” Though an admiral of the local body, the primary role is teach/preach (1 Tim. 4:6, 11, 13, 16; 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:15, 24; Titus 2:1 cf. such are God’s provision for the church Eph. 4:11–14.
- b. Virtuous Venture: “good work”
- c. Accountable Aspiration: Local church = reflection of its leadership Hos. 4:9. Each leader will be accountable for such influence Jam. 3:1. Pastors must be able to live a life worth imitating 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 4:9.

2. Reputation (2a)

- a. Integrity:
 - i. “Above Reproach” Blameless cannot mean sinless but it does mean not being hypocritical. Above reproach is not perfection. Most (if not all) elders, deacons, etc. have felt disqualified after reading such passages as this.
 - ii. Aware: John MacArthur noted: “Pastors must take great care to remain above reproach for several reasons. First, they are the special targets of Satan, and he will assault them with more severe temptation than others. Those on the front lines of the spiritual battle will bear the brunt of satanic opposition. Second, their fall has a greater potential for harm. Satan knows that when a shepherd falls, the effect on the sheep is devastating. Third, leaders’ greater knowledge of the truth, and accountability to live it, brings greater chastening when they sin. Fourth, elders’ sins are more hypocritical than others’ because they preach against the very sins they commit. Leaders need an abundance of God’s grace and power because of their greater responsibility and visibility. To protect themselves leaders must spend in-depth time in the study of God’s Word. They must be “constantly nourished on the words of the faith [Scripture] and of the sound doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:6). The psalmist wrote, “Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee” (Ps. 119:11). A leader must continuously expose his life to the light of the Word of God. He must also be a man of prayer, and be accountable to others in spiritual fellowship.”¹
 - iii. Awake: innocent ignorance is an excuse only for a while. The pastor must be awake to the perversions inside the visible church and cling to truth as he calls out such infiltration.
- b. Intent: Blameless is the term of integrity which frames the following qualifications for the role. MacArthur noted that these qualifications “are set against the backdrop of the unqualified leaders in Ephesus. He places God’s standards against what the Ephesians had allowed the leadership to degenerate into. Some of the leaders were teaching false doctrine (1:3; 4:1–3, 7; 6:3–5), turning aside to “fruitless discussion” (1:6). They misused the law and misunderstood the gospel (1:7–11). Some were women (2:12), though that was forbidden by God’s Word. Others were guilty of sin, and needed public rebuke (5:20).”²
- c. Inclusive: what is striking about these following qualifications is that they are common to the common believer. It stands to reason that leaders must model an obvious display of such. What is helpful is the emphasis on the basics of discipleship. However, too many churches are satisfied with more sensational qualifications such as their pastors being attractive, popular (hip with skinny jeans), overtly gifted orators (great speakers). In fact, consider 1

¹ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 103). Moody Press.

² Ibid 92.

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Cor. 2:1-5; 2 Cor. 3:5. Success is not determined by popularity of message, persona, or even abilities but by one’s faithfulness to the call.

3. Demonstration (2b-7)

a. Allegiant (2b)

- i. Fidelity: “one woman man.” Neither “husband” nor “wife” are used but certainly implied.
- ii. Eligibility: Taken too literal all men are disqualified (2). Also, unmarried men, widowers, and biblically divorced men who are free to remarry are disqualified. But such cannot be the case as Paul, and Timothy (at least during the writings) were not married. Furthermore, such a wooden literal adherence would disqualify husbands and could allow unmarried men with a live-in woman. Plus, they would have to have multiple children as such is the literal wording; thus disqualifying all with only one or no children.
- iii. Contextually: the cultural situation in which Paul wrote Timothy was morally embarrassing for the polygamist Jew. See **Further Consideration**. It was permissible for Gentiles to have sexual relations outside of their marriages.
- iv. Practically: Paul included such monogamous fidelity as prohibiting both polygamy and monogamous infidelity outside of marriage. Jesus taught God’s intent for marriage as such (cf. Mat. 19:1-9). Though we can debate the qualifications, the intent is likely a displayed continuous fidelity of the believing husband or the abstinent single man.
- v. Theologically: each of us fall enormously short of our obligations and even qualifications. The standard never ought to be compromised and thus Paul offers these qualifiers to which we must adhere. But with all biblical instruction, balance of other clear and prominent passages regarding the topic must be employed. We are literally (albeit spiritually) new creatures in Christ and the former things have passed away (2 Cor. 5:17). We are reborn in Christ and have a clean slate as it were. And even still after conversion, we are guilty of lust, idolatry, selfishness, and pride to name a few. Because humility is a leadership indispensable, does an occasional fall to pride disqualify? Or, has an exposure to pornography (including rated R movies which show heated and revealing sex scenes) disqualified leaders? There are binaries of sin categories e.g. omission and commission, a sin that does and does not lead to death 1 Jn. 5:16, sins before conversion wiped clean and sins after conversion with loss of reward, occasional sins and besetting sins. In these categories lie the two following sins viz. unrepentant sins and those of which there is repentance and a waged war. Consider 1 Jn. 2:4; 3:6; and Gal. 5:19-21.

b. Attitude (2c-e)

- i. Temperate / self-control – sober-minded (cf. Titus 2:12) such is not to be ruled by carnal impulses i.e. spiritually disciplined.
- ii. Discrete / circumspect / considerate / prudent. It may connote wisdom e.g. being trustworthy with personal information i.e. discrete.
- iii. Respectable: It’s been said: You are not who others think you are. You are not what you think you are. You are what you think others think of you. Some translate the word as “good behavior.” Do others see you as having integrity in your faith? The opposite of hypocrisy is integrity.

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- iv. Considerate / hospitable charitable. Note 2 things: 1. These virtuous terms overlap a bit. 2. Gentleness is nuanced here perhaps but where such gentle hospitable actions are performed, the ambassador for Christ never compromises truth.
- c. Ability (2d)
 - i. The right attitude and virtues are indispensable to the role but so is the actual giftedness. In fact, it's the one qualification that is different from the deacons and other believers.
 - ii. Teaching is the obvious main role of the overseer (see 1. a.). The admiral of ministries and primary teacher of the Word. Cf. 2 Tim. 2:24 where also the ability is linked with gentle self-control and kindness to all – but Jesus, Paul, and pastors must not tolerate the wolves in wool or others who would do the church harm.
- d. Abstinence (3)
 - i. Such abstinences are redundant as they are the negatives of the positive characteristics.
- e. Authority (4-5)
 - i. Family = microcosm of society and thus the potential leader must demonstrate a proper management of his household.
 - ii. Children are to be submissive and reverent so as to reveal the leaders ability to discipline and love.
 - iii. V. 5 is the obvious reason for such affirmation
- f. Accomplished/Adequate (6)
 - i. Everyone must start somewhere but fundamentals must be established before handing the keys of the local church to a pastor.
 - ii. An obvious one would be an adequate familiarity with the Word. Many ordinations require an inquisition or an adherence to a creed or confession of faith that the candidate ought to be able to articulate.
 - iii. For me: I had experience with teaching adult classes, evangelism, general ministry, and a basic creedal articulation of systematic theology. I also had a family and a bachelors in Biblical Studies not counting the years of personal apologetic studies and theological research which still carries on today! With my learning comes knowledge and growth, and with the knowledge and growth come wisdom and teachability, which in turn begets more understanding. Wisdom, humility, obedience, and faith increase in this cycle.
- g. Acknowledged (7)
 - i. I do not take myself too seriously. And those who know me know this. However, there is a respect for my faith, position, competence, and conviction as I demonstrate to all that my life is governed by the Word of God!

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PC:

Paul laid out some qualifications for “overseers” of the churches, and pastors and leaders must heed them well as there are awesome implications for fulfilling or failing to do such. As a pastor I have felt disqualified as such but I’m pretty sure that most other (if not all) pastors have felt the same. It is good that we not try and lessen the sobering severity of such parameters as the ministry and reputation of Christ and the Church is always observed. In short: the charge to be blameless bishops involves having a command of reason; not being swayed by emotion, temptation, or majority consensus. Living a life of integrity modeled in his family. Having discernment and showing resolve to do justly when most do not. Being balanced with grace in assessments and hermeneutics. Being teachable, obedient, and humble by being in the Word continually. It is less about ability and capacity and more about faithfulness and humility. Such is the model for all believers and nothing less can be expected of pastors.

Further Consideration:

Re: One Woman Man. “With regard to (3), polygamy, which existed among Jews of the NT age (see Str-B ad loc. for documentation; they cite, among many others, Josephus, *Ant.* 17.14; *B.J.* 1.477), is certainly ruled out by the sense of the phrase. In a.d. 212 the *lex Antoniana de civitate* made monogamy the law for Romans but Jews were excepted. In a.d. 393 Theodosius enacted a special law against polygamy among Jews, since they persisted in the practice (Hillman, *Polygamy*, 20f.). Two Greek marriage contracts have been found that seem to be concerned to prohibit polygamy: “It shall not be lawful for Philiscus to bring in another wife besides Appolania” (92 b.c.); “Ptolemaeus ... shall not ... insult her nor bring in another wife” (13 b.c., both in Hunt-Edgar, *Select Papyri* I, 7, 11).³

Str-B H. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* I–V. 3rd ed., München, 1956.

Ant. Antiquitates Judaicae (Josephus)

B.J. De Bello Judaico (Josephus)

³ Knight, G. W. (1992). [*The Pastoral Epistles: a commentary on the Greek text*](#) (p. 158). W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.