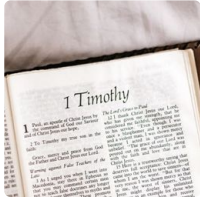


# OpenTheo

## 1 Timothy 2:14 - 3:3



### 1 Timothy - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses 1 Timothy 2:14-3:3 where he explains that the scripture is not punishing women but is emphasizing the importance of protective leadership from a husband. He also delves into the roles of Elders and Bishops and explains that the qualifications are often difficult to find within a congregation. Gregg suggests that the behavioral aspects of the candidate's home life should also be taken into consideration when considering eldership qualifications.

## Transcript

The Bible says when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice. The man in authority is the target of a great deal of abuse from man and devil. And maybe God too, if he does a bad job at it.

Because he has a stricter condemnation. Who wants it? Not me. Unfortunately, I'm in a position I have to take some leadership.

I take as little as I can. I don't like leadership, and most men are smart enough not to. Most women, I guess because they've been denied it, want it, like Eve was denied that one fruit.

She wanted it too. There's something about things that are forbidden that attracts it. What I want to say, though, is this.

Rather than saying that Paul is punishing women because of what he did, he's saying, listen, if Eve had been under the protective leadership of her husband, she would have been better off, and we would all have been better off. So let the women stay under the protection of their husbands, and it'll be better for everybody, including her. This is not a punishment of her.

This is a protected place for her, the safe place for her, the place that God ordained for her. Let her stay there. If Eve had stayed there, we would all be better off.

What is that place of the woman, then? He states it in the final verse, 15. Nevertheless,

she will be saved in childbearing. One commenter said the word childbearing can be translated as childrearing, so it's more than just having babies, it's bringing up children.

If they continue in faith, love, and holiness to self-control. Now, I know some of you are urgently hoping that you can somehow dismiss what I'm about to say by saying, oh, Steve's on his soapbox again. But you're looking desperately for some way to say it any other way than the way I'm going to take it.

Right? Because you don't want to believe what I say about this, and you know what I say about this, but it says this. I was talking yesterday to a brother who heard me talking about women's roles and childrearing and so forth in our Friday night meeting a few weeks ago. And he's a good friend of mine.

We were talking, and he was laughing and stuff. And he just came up and said, since you were so awful long, what did you say about women? I said, I'm no ouch for men. I think you should be embarrassed to say so.

That's what I was talking about. Yeah, right, for him. I said, well, I don't know any other way to take the scriptures.

How do you take these scriptures? What scriptures do you use for your contrary opinion? And he was just chuckling and juggling around. He didn't offer any scriptures because there aren't any. I said, you are a slave to our culture.

I said, I don't take the position I take about women and children because it pleases me, or because our culture forces me to. I have to resist our culture. I have to confront our culture and say what I say.

But that's what the Word of God says. If you want to say the opposite, then you take an easy way. You're giving in to the culture and going against the Word of God.

The whole question is, who's the authority in your life? Is it God, or is it man? If it's man, then the collective opinions of our culture are going to dominate your thinking, because you fear man. If it's God, then His Word is going to dominate your thinking. And I'm not saying I'm better than anyone else, but I want to do what the Word of God says.

And believe me, I don't have a personal preference, apart from what I read here, about what women should do. I really don't. I'm not one of these guys who wants to keep women barefoot and pregnant and under man's dominion.

I don't have any interest in that, believe me. I like women. And by the way, it's because I like women that I recommend this to them.

Because Paul liked women too, and he knows God likes women. And he knows that God has ordained for women the thing that is the safest and best for them. And that when

women get up to eat, and don't want what God has chosen for them, they choose something that is to their heart.

I wish I had, I do have it. I'm going to keep this one. I'm going to read something here.

I realize we've run out of time, but who cares. This article I kept, it was in Newsweek magazine, November 19th, 1990. It was actually not an article, but an editorial submitted by a reader.

They have a section in Newsweek called My Turn, where anyone can submit an interesting thing. And this is called The Failure of Feminism. And this woman tells, she's about my age, she tells about how she got married, about the same thing I did, same time my first wife and I were married.

She did the same thing my first wife did. They had a baby girl, and she left her husband. With the first issue of, you know, whatever that women's magazine was, etc.

And she says, it's terrible, she says, The main message of feminism was, when she left her husband, Woman, you don't need a man. Remember those of you around 40? The phrase, a woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle? That joke circulated through consciousness-raising groups across the country in the 70s. It was a philosophy that made divorce and cohabitation casual and routine.

Feminism made women disposable. So today, a lot of females are around 40 and single with a couple of kids to raise on their own. Child support payments might pay for a few pairs of shoes, but in general, feminism gave men all the financial and personal advantages over women.

What's worse, we asked for it. Many women decided, you don't need a family structure to raise your children. We packed them off to daycare centers where they could get their nurturing from professionals.

Then we put on our suits and ties and packed our briefcases and took off in this great experiment, convinced that there was no difference between ourselves and the guys in the other offices. I'll just keep reading here a little bit, because, she says, the reality of feminism is a lot of frenzied and overworked women dropping kids off at daycare centers. If the child is sick, they just send along some of the kid's Tylenol and then rush off to their underpaid jobs that they don't even like.

Two of my working mother friends told me they were mopping floors and folding laundry after midnight last week. They live on five hours of sleep and it shows on their faces, and they've got husbands. I'm not advocating that women who regress to the brainless housewives of the fifties, who spent afternoons baking macaroni sculptures and keeping Betty Crocker files.

Post-World War II women were the first to be left with a lot of free time, and they weren't too creative in filling it. Perhaps feminism was a reaction to that brainless Betty. I'm not sure I agree with her, she's not a Christian writing this, but, she says, in this respect, feminism has served a purpose.

Women should get education and so on, but where is it? I didn't plan to read this, so I didn't underline it, but there is a place here where she says that, here, this is just good stuff, I'll read this. She says, the other day I had the world's fastest blind analysis. I think she's talking about here a date she had with a guy, let's see, okay.

She says, She says, I too am from the experimental generation, but I couldn't even pay for my own drink at this date she went to. To me, feminism has backfired against women. In 1973 I left what could have been a perfectly good marriage, taking with me a child in diapers, a ten-year-old Plymouth, and a volume one number one of Ms. Magazine.

I was convinced I could make it on my own. In the last 15 years, my ex has married or lived with successive women. As he gets older, his women stay in their 20s.

Meanwhile, I've stayed unattached. He drives a BMW, I ride the bus, and so forth. And she basically says, and I wish I could find the exact line, but she says, basically, feminism didn't set women free, it set men free.

Because when marriage was honored, and family was honored, men had a responsibility to support women, but when women went out and got jobs and got the same jobs and the same pay as the men, men didn't have to support them anymore, men could go out and, you know, men didn't need families anymore. Women get the children when a divorce takes place, and so the men are set free, the women are in bondage, see? To a lifestyle God never intended for them. Anyway, I, sorry I had to read so little of that, but that's a very interesting article coming from a non-Christian and published in Newsweek Magazine.

Here's what it says. She, the woman, will be safe in childbearing, or childbearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness and self-control. Now, this certainly doesn't mean the woman's going to get safe and go to heaven because she has children, because Paul himself makes room for women who are not married, and even says it's a good calling.

In 1 Corinthians 7, he said the woman is a virgin and doesn't get married, can serve God with her body and soul and mind and not be distracted, though marriage is also good, and he advocates young widows to get married in this chapter 5. But here, Paul is not saying that you have to have children to be safe. What he's saying is one of two things. He has just said that women led the way in transgression, and we know that the curse that came upon her affected the whole area of childbearing.

She had to have pain in childbearing. And he might be saying something, he's saying that, essentially, that even though women bear the curse of what they did, they can still be saved. Even through their painful childbearing and so forth, they can still be saved if they continue in faith, love, and holiness.

In spite of the role they played in the Garden of Eden, they can still be saved despite this and despite the childbearing and so forth. I believe, however, that he means something different than that. I think he's essentially saying saved in the sense of working out their salvation.

He says in chapter 4, verse 16 to Timothy, Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine, continue in it, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you. First Timothy 4, verse 16. He tells Timothy, if Timothy continues in his proper role as a minister, that he will save himself and those who hear.

Certainly it doesn't mean that the Christians he's preaching and himself are not already saved people. It must mean that, in a sense, you will keep yourself in the will of God. You will progress in sanctification, which is an aspect of salvation.

You will work out your salvation as you ought to do in the role that God has given you to do. Keep doing these things and you'll save yourself. And I think that he means salvation the same way in this passage.

A woman will be saved. As Timothy will be saved in his role as a minister, the woman will be saved in her role as a childbearer, as a mother. Now, saved from what? Perhaps saved from getting into all the trouble that the Ephesian women were getting into, who were not Christians.

A woman at home is much safer from the influences of the world. And she's protected where she ought to be, like Eve ought to have been, under her husband's leadership. Having children is a very sanctifying experience, if it is embraced.

The sad thing is, many people don't embrace it and love it, and therefore it's just another irritation in their life. They don't like their kids and it doesn't make them better mothers or better people. But I know many godly mothers who embrace their role in this and have testified that it was their salvation, in a sense, from their selfishness.

My wife would be glad to tell you this if she was here, and I know another woman who testified the same. She never knew. She never even began to overcome selfishness in her life until she had children to lay down her life for.

And when you have children that you have to serve them, or else they're going to die. Then you learn how to serve, selflessly. You learn to serve in a Christian attitude, because those children aren't going to reward you.

They're not even going to remember what you did for them, for the most part. And therefore you learn to have a disinterested love and service, which doesn't come naturally to us, but is what we're supposed to develop as Christians. That's part of our sanctification, that's part of our work in our salvation.

And in home life, Paul says, a woman will find the outworking of her salvation. That's how I understand his meaning here. We find later on, we won't look at it now in detail, of course we're late.

In chapter 5 he tells the younger widows to do exactly the same thing. To get married, have children, guide the home, stay home. He tells in Titus chapter 2 the young women are to be keepers at home, love their husbands, love their children.

It's fine, obviously, Paul believed not only in marriage, but as the home life, as the safe place for the woman, and the place that God ordained. Certainly that's what the first woman was called to do. Eve was not called to take dominion personally over the earth, but to raise up children who would take dominion.

And while many women may be tempted to be pastors or evangelists or something like that, I don't really think that that's the highest calling they have. Let them raise a home full of evangelists and pastors, and they'll multiply themselves far better. Because raising children is a far better discipleship situation than trying to raise somebody else's children who got saved later in life.

Believe me. Because I'm trying to do both. I'm raising my own kids, I'm raising somebody else's kids.

In some ways. And it's easier to disciple your own. Because you don't have to undo a whole lot of stuff they got somewhere else.

So, discipleship, yes, we are supposed to make disciples. The principal way in which women are taught to make disciples is, for the most part, not without exceptions, but for the most part, discipling their own children. A worthy thing.

Making more Christians for the next generation. By the way, in so doing, they also teach men. That is, the next generation of men.

In teaching little boys, women are having a tremendous amount of influence over the men of the next generation of Christians. So, Paul's not afraid of letting them have influence over men. He's not afraid of the kind of influence there.

He just wants the church to express the world, testify to the world, the divine order of things. Because it's very important. Because God ordained it.

And we should be concerned for it. Just as God told Moses to make sure he built the

tabernacle according to the pattern and not to deviate from it because it testifies to spiritual realities. So, I think Paul says, make sure you build the church according to the pattern.

Because any deviation from the pattern that God's ordained is going to communicate the wrong message. And it does. The church today communicates a lot of mixed messages, most of them wrong, to the world.

So, I would say, let's get back to what Paul said. Let's stop there. Thank you.

All right. Let's turn to 1 Timothy chapter 3. I guess I shouldn't try to make any predictions about how much we will cover in this session because I have failed to live up to my predictions in the past. But I will say this.

Just in the time that we've allotted for the pastorals, we will not finish them if we don't move faster. We have allotted 15 hours for studies in 13 chapters of the pastorals. And you might recall we used the first three hours in introduction, which leaves us, as it turns out, less than an hour per chapter.

And we've used an hour and a half per chapter so far. So, we've got to move a little better than that. Okay, chapter 3. This is a faithful saying.

If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop, then, must be blameless, the husband of one's life, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous, one who rules his own house well, having his children in subjection with all reverence. For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God? Not a novice, lest, being puffed up with pride, he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.

I pointed out in our introduction, this is not exactly how it reads in the Greek. You can see the word same is added in Italian in this version. It's more literally, lest he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

Moreover, he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and a snare of the devil. Okay. Now, here we have the qualifications for an officer in the church called a bishop.

And I use the term officer with some reservation. We usually think of elders, pastors, bishops, or whatever, whatever terms we use. We usually think of that as a church officer.

Unfortunately, the term officer comes to mind in our culture, something that it probably didn't mean when Paul spoke of these offices. When we think of an officer, we think of an executive in a corporation. You know, a CEO or a corporate vice president or, you know,

somebody like that, holding an office.

And unfortunately, in the modern church, in the West at least, the church has come to be organized a little bit like secular corporations. And pastors do operate a little bit like corporate CEOs. And, you know, there is something of an institutional corporate model for the church that we have come to be acquainted with and to take for granted.

Therefore, when we think of elders or pastors, depending on what kind of church government the church we go to has, we tend to think of whoever is in leadership as being analogous to the officers in a corporation. And, in fact, that's exactly how churches often are set up, that the elders, the board, or trustees, or someone are like corporate executives. And, unfortunately, this is not always the case, but unfortunately, sometimes it is the case that if the big and wealthy church, the pastor or whoever is in charge, also lives in a lifestyle similar to that of a corporate executive.

And this is all part of the fact that we have, in this culture, in my judgment, we have lost sight of the spiritual nature of the church and have interpreted church in terms of corporate and institutional models which were foreign, in my thinking they were foreign in the way Paul talked about the church or thought about the church or knew the church to be. In those days, of course, the church was not a politically powerful organization, and, if anything, it had to duck from persecution a great deal, especially in the first three centuries. We know that in the first three centuries the church never had buildings that they owned or that they built for their own means.

They met in public buildings or in homes. Therefore, they didn't have a building budget. We don't have a lot of information about exactly how the bishops or elders and deacons functioned in the early church.

We have a description of their character, and we have isolated references here and there in Acts and a few other places to their presence or to their existence, but we don't have very much knowledge of how they acted, and, of course, that leaves us open to speculate a little bit. Now, let me just acquaint you with the fact that in the modern church there are three principal forms of church government. It's clear that each church that has one of these forms of government thinks it's the biblical model, and this is due to the fact that we have actually so little detail in the Bible about how the church was organized.

We do know the names of some of the leaders of the church. I mean, that is, names of their bishops, elders, deacons, and so forth, but we don't really know very much. We don't have a job description of these people anywhere, at least not a detailed one, but today we have churches that are what we would call episcopal in government structure.

Now, the episcopalian church is not the only church that is like this. The word episcopal comes from the Greek word episkopos, which means bishop. Actually, it literally means



overseer.

Api, the prefix api, E-P-I, means over or upon. Skopos, you can guess what that means. To see, like telescope, microscope, comes from skopos in the Greek.

So, episkopos, to see over or an overseer. The literal meaning of episkopos is an overseer, and the word bishop is simply an English word that has been called from our language or framed in our language to carry that concept. As you can see, the word bishop, as we think of it, usually sounds like an office, some kind of an ecclesiastical position, and indeed it is a position, but rather the Greek word doesn't have that connotation.

It's more of a description of a job, a job description, an overseer, somebody who sees over, who watches over. It's more of a job description than a title, in my understanding. And episcopal forms of government today are churches that have bishops, and usually bishops oversee a group of churches in their bishopric, and there are, in each church, pastors and or elders or whatever, but there is a bishop over the area, and that's where the authority rests, in ecclesiastical positions.

Then there's the Presbyterian form of government, which comes from the Greek word presbuteros. Presbuteros is the Greek word for elder. Now, once again, elder is used something as a title in the New Testament of an officer in the church or of a leader in the church, but presbuteros, as a word etymologically, it simply means an older man.

It is the Greek word in the masculine for an older person, so an older man is what presbuteros means. And it's very possible that the original elders of the churches were simply that, older men, older Christians of the male gender, who, because of their age, had respect as counselors and teachers, and their wisdom was esteemed, and therefore they were given some kind of leadership in the church. Of course, there are qualifications for their character given here in this chapter, but it still remains that they were probably older in age, as well as older in maturity, originally.

The idea of a presbuteros actually, as an officer, comes from the synagogue. Before the church came into being, there was the Jewish synagogue, and there were elders in the synagogue. And it seems that by instituting elders in every church, in some measure, the apostles were following the pattern of the synagogue, that the churches, the individual churches, were structured a little bit like the synagogues were.

And presbyterian form of government, and of course the presbyterian church is a good representation of that, but there are other churches besides presbyterian denominational churches that follow a presbyterian mode of government, where the power is resting in a plurality of elders, where the elders, or the presbuteroid, the eldership, is the final authority of the church. Actually, most of the churches I have been in in the last few years, although they have not been presbyterian churches, and they

have been, in fact, independent charismatic churches, have had something of a presbyterian form of government. That is to say, the elders were the leaders of the church.

And then, of course, there's what's called the congregational form of government, which is more or less democratic. The congregation is the authority. It follows an American democratic model that everyone has an equal right to say what should happen, everyone has a vote.

And so pastors are voted in and voted out, church policies are voted upon, and basically the majority rules, and that's called the congregational form of government. Every church has one of these three forms. Either the congregation has the authority, and it's strictly democratic, which is sort of a representative form of government, because the elders are usually chosen or appointed in some way, and then they represent the congregation and make the decisions, or else an episcopal form of government, where some kind of ecclesiastical bishops make the decisions, are the final choice.

Now, of course, there's a problem here, because any distinction between episcopal and presbyterian is simply one of semantics, because in the early church, as is clearly seen, the presbyteroi, the elders, were the same individuals as the bishops. The bishops and elders were simply interchangeable terms. I pointed that out earlier, and we'll see it again every time we treat the passages, that those who are called elders are the same people who are called bishops.

They're simply interchangeable titles. Elder speaks of their venerable age or maturity, because elder simply means an older man, and bishop speaks of their function. They are overseers.

The same individual was both an elder and an overseer. Those who were the older brothers tended to oversee the church a little like shepherds do, and so we find instructions given elsewhere, not here, to the elders and overseers and bishops. They are told to shepherd the flock, to feed the flock.

Their role is a pastoral role, and as I think I mentioned in a previous session, in the New Testament you never find a church that clearly has a pastor. There are churches where there are prominent leaders who are probably like the older elders, as, for instance, in the Jerusalem church, James seems to carry some weight above others. This is probably because he was respected for his connection with Jesus, and the other elders of the church kind of deferred him.

I was an elder in a church in California where all the elders were really equal. The pastor was simply one of the elders. We call him a pastor just as a concession, because most people in the church wanted the church to have a pastor, but the pastor himself didn't see himself as above or different than the other elders.

He was just one of the elders. But he was the oldest man on the eldership, and the rest of us tended to defer to him just out of respect to his age. In his own opinion, he had no more authority than anyone else, and he only had one voice among the elders.

There were eight of us all together, and really he would defer to us very often, but the tendency was for us to wish to defer to him, because he was a more experienced man, and he'd been in the ministry far longer, and he was older and mature and so forth. And I think probably in the early church that was not too uncommon, that although technically the eldership was the body of leaders, there may have been one or two in any given body of elders who were simply more mature, more respectable than the others, more experienced. And I think James probably was like that in the church of Jerusalem, and later on there were men like that in Rome and in Ephesus and other places.

Polycarp had that position later in Smyrna and so forth. He was the oldest man in the church, and therefore he came to be called the bishop. Although all elders were really bishops, he was like the bishop par excellence.

He was the oldest man, the wisest man in the church, and the other elders, no doubt, although they were politically on a par with him, just respected him, and so his words carried more weight. Eventually, that developed in the third century probably into more like an officer who, by virtue of holding the office of the bishop, simply had more political clout, regardless of his age or character or experience. And of course, after Constantine came to power, the office of bishop was simply a political office in the church, and it was held by people regardless of their character.

Sometimes people who weren't even converted held that office. So you can see how this evolved, or devolved, from a situation where originally the leaders were the mature, highest, the oldest, most character, had the highest character in the church, and they were in their position because their very demeanor and maturity commanded respect. And eventually, as the church deteriorated in its structure, it became more of a political office, which people would aspire for, and it would be something that was not really a spiritual thing anymore at all.

It had become a political, institutional thing. How are bishops chosen today? I've never been in a church that has that kind of bishop. I'm not sure how they're chosen.

I'm sure that someone here may have experience, but I really don't know how they're chosen. They may be chosen by previously existing bishops or something, I mean, a body of bishops or something. I don't really know.

I can't say. In the Roman Catholic Church, they're probably appointed by someone at a higher level. I imagine a cardinal or someone like that is above.

Bishops, am I correct? Is that a higher office? And I don't know who appoints the

cardinals, maybe the pope himself. I don't know. I'm not that familiar with the fine points of these different forms of government.

All I know is that they exist and they're different, and the term bishop has definitely taken on different connotations than it had in the New Testament times. And so when Paul used the word bishop, he's simply using a word that he used synonymously with elder. I pointed out earlier this, but just to clarify that and make it clear, in Titus chapter 1, where Paul again gives the qualifications for bishop, Titus 1.5, he calls them elders, and in Titus 1.7 he calls them bishops.

The terms are interchangeable. In Titus 1.5, he says, appoint elders in every city. In verse 7, he says, for a bishop must be blameless.

Likewise, when Paul called for the elders of the Church of Ephesus, in Acts chapter 20, when he was at Miletus, and he called for the Ephesian elders to come to him, it says, take heed to the flock of God over which God has made you episcopate, overseer, bishops. So, it's clear that these terms were used interchangeably. And I think all New Testament scholars now acknowledge that, though tradition obscured that fact for a long time because of traditional forms of church government that had developed.

What I'm saying, though, is that the term elder, bishop, even in the more liberated independent churches today, often conveys the idea of a corporate executive or an officer, which is probably not a good term for us to use. In the King James, 1 Timothy 3.1, it says, if any man desires the office of a bishop. Is that correct? You have the King James? Does it say an office of a bishop, or am I wrong? It doesn't? It does.

The New King James says, if anyone desires the position, which is probably better. The word office, actually, in the Greek, doesn't convey the idea of a political position so much as a function. A functional position.

A service performed. And an elder or a bishop is not somebody who has special privileges. Remember what Jesus said about leadership? He said, the rulers and the Gentiles exercise lordship over them and have dominion over them.

But he said, it shall not be so among you. But he that would be chief among you must be the servant and the slave of all. And unfortunately, the church has lost sight of this.

Although most churches are going to have been able to quote that scripture, they have lost sight of the fact that their leaders are more like the worldly model of leaders. They make decisions like men who hold high offices make decisions. Or, as I understand it, as Jesus taught it, and probably the way the apostles understood it, as near as I can tell, an elder was not someone who was appointed to a privileged caste in the church.

He was simply an older man, more spiritual, who demonstrated spirituality by being more of a servant, who was recognized, officially or not officially, as somebody who

could be trusted to teach in the church, and people could go to him for counsel and so forth, and trust him because he had maturity. And that he wasn't a man who wielded his office like a stick and said bow or be thrown out, so much as he was a man who by his very character, as the description of the elder's character makes it clear, by his very character he commanded respect. And people would want to hear what he had to say because, I mean, his life was attractive to those who desired to live God's lives because he was a model of it.

Now, Paul says if a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires the good work. Now, there's more than one way to see this. He might say it's a good thing to desire the position of a bishop.

That's a good desire. And I'm glad to see that some people desire that position. Or he might be saying there are people who desire the position of bishop, but they don't realize what it is they're asking for.

The bishop job is a good job. I mean, it's a good function in the church. It's a good thing to have, bishops.

But he may not be affirming that it's a good thing to be eager to be in that position. To be willing to serve that function, if you qualify, if the church wants you to or needs you to, I think is a very good thing. But when someone says, I want to be a bishop, I want to be an elder, one wonders why they want to be.

I mean, is it because they want recognition as a leader? If so, one wonders whether they know what a leader is in the early church or in the church. A leader is not a powerful privileged position, but the opposite. It's a position of responsibility.

It requires sacrifice at a level that other people are not required to sacrifice. It requires a higher degree of sanctity and holiness than is required of the average person, as we see here. Now, he does acknowledge, though, that there have to be some people in the office of bishop or in the position of elders.

And in fact, he tells Titus to appoint them. He doesn't tell Timothy necessarily to appoint them, but it seems to go without saying that that's why he's telling Timothy about these qualifications. Apparently, Timothy, like Paul on occasions, was in a position that he had to add elders.

Now, Titus was in Crete, and apparently in a brand new church where he might have been instituting the first batch of elders that church had. Timothy was not in that position. Timothy was moving into a situation where a church had been established long ago by Paul himself.

Paul himself had established elders there. But now, Timothy, this is maybe a generation later, that Timothy is in a position to replace perhaps some of the older elders who had

died. And there were now a need for a large number of men in that position.

And so Timothy had to maybe bring in another generation of elders. A few second-generation elders had to be appointed. And so Paul tells him exactly what kind of men to choose.

Now, when you read this list, in one sense, there's nothing in the list of qualifications that shouldn't be true of all Christians. In another sense, it is such a lofty list that it's hard to find even one man in some churches who really meets all these qualifications. I mean, that's sort of a strange thing, because on one hand, anything that says an elder should be really every Christian should be this way.

On the other hand, it's very difficult to find even one in some churches that are consistently like this. And we have to ask ourselves, if a church is going to have elders, how much do we hold out for them to qualify in all these respects? I would say as much as we can. If a church exists where there's really no one in there who qualifies for all these things, maybe that church shouldn't exist.

Maybe that church should disband. They should go find a church where the elders aren't qualified to be leaders in the church, biblically speaking. On the other hand, I happen to know from talking to people who've gone to a lot of different churches more than I have, in some cases it may be hard to find a church in a whole city that has elders that meet these qualifications.

I mean, it is difficult to find Christian men, for example, whose families are entirely in order, or who could not be accused of being, in some sense, having evidence of covetousness in their life. Their lifestyle is perhaps a little more affluent than that of Jesus or the apostles. It would be not clear whether we could say that person is covetous or not.

A lot of godly people have had more than one wife in their lifetime, and the question of what it means to be the husband of one wife is of interest. What I'm saying is that in our culture, and even in our churches, our evangelical churches, a lot of times it's not easy to find a group of men in a church who meet these qualifications. And then we face a dilemma.

Should we, therefore, not have any elders? Or should we take the best we've got? Find the men who most closely approximate this standard, and just trust God to make up the difference in terms of what the church is going to lack for their deficiency. But I don't know the answer to that. I would say that certainly the church needs some kind of leaders, although those leaders do not necessarily have to be formally appointed.

Now, in the early church, Paul did appoint elders. He told Titus to appoint elders and so forth. But he told them what the qualifications would be.

Suppose you're in a group that doesn't have anyone who meets those qualifications completely. Well, perhaps you shouldn't appoint anyone to an office of elder. But that doesn't mean there wouldn't be more mature Christians in that circle that you would go to for counsel or that you would trust for teaching.

It's a difficult thing. We are far removed from the situation that Paul described or that Paul knew. And in many situations, I've almost despaired that we could even restore what Paul once said.

For instance, when Paul said there's only one church in any given city, there's a lot of people today who say there should still be only one church in each city. And a lot of people know this and say, yes, that's the New Testament pattern. The New Testament pattern.

But how are you going to do it? Who's going to lead it? Is it going to be the Baptist pastor who's going to lead it? Or are the elders of the Presbyterian church going to lead it? Or how about the Nazarene leaders or the Mennonite leaders or whatever? Which leaders, if we say, okay, there's only one church to count, who are we going to recognize as the leaders? Well, obviously, the Baptist is going to have a few problems with the Assembly of God leadership. And the Nazarene is going to have a little bit of problems with, you know, the Methodist leadership, or not the Methodist so much, but I'd say the Presbyterian leadership. And, you know, it's very difficult to know if we could ever come back to a situation, I mean, apart from just persecution dissolving all barriers or something, which may be what it takes.

But I think that's right. Is it even possible for the modern church to follow the standard that we read of in the New Testament? There's so many things that are different. And I would say if it isn't completely possible, we should still aim at that standard as nearly as we can.

And more power to us if we can meet it exactly. And when it comes to appointment of elders, I do think that the things that Paul wrote should be the standard. We look when a person is being considered for eldership in the church.

We should say, okay, let's look at the standard. If he falls short at one point in some way, then we have to question, you know, do we have to hold out for that, or shall we just figure we've got the closest thing available? It's a hard decision. But the problem that we do see in the modern church is that leaders, whether they call them pastors or elders or bishops or whatever, do not necessarily reflect the highest degree of character that's available in their churches.

There are members of the congregation who are holier than some of the pastors in terms of the way they entertain themselves, the way they spend their money, the way they raise their families, and a lot of issues like that, which Paul indicated are important

issues. And sadly, the qualifications for leadership in the church today are often on totally different grounds than what Paul has here. A seminary education is all that's needed to be appointed to the pastor in some denominations, regardless of whether you're mature.

And the ironic thing is, of course, most seminary graduates are young, and yet they're put in charge of churches sometimes that are full of old saints. To me, this is vanity and vexation of spirit, you know, and striving after the wind, you know. Like Solomon, I'm very depressed when I see this, that a young guy who doesn't know the first thing about ministry from personal experience and whose own character has had no opportunity to be tested, he's made the pastor and general CEO over a church congregation that's full of old saints who know ten times as much as he does about living the Christian life and live it better than he does.

This is a far cry from what Paul would have allowed in the churches. And, of course, nowadays, since there are denominational standards and so forth, a lot of times all a person has to do to become a pastor or an elder is jump through the hoops. And, you know, the standards often have very little to do with whether this man's family is in order, whether he's not covetous, whether he's holy in all respects, whether everything about his life is an example to the believer, to follow, whether he's like a father in the church, whether he's one of the older men with a history of, you know, of success in his Christian life.

When I say success, I mean success and behold. Those are the issues that Paul expresses concern about. But they're not the issues that really are the criteria for the choice of elders in most churches today, even in evangelical churches that believe the Bible.

Partly I said it's because it's hard to find even one person sometimes in the church who meets all these qualifications. You may find a very holy person, but his kids aren't following the Lord, so he's disqualified by this list. That's why I'm not an elder and don't want to be an elder and don't think I ever can be an elder or should be.

I don't believe I qualify by this list. Most of the things on the list I can read without feeling convicted, you know. But, I mean, for example, at this moment in time, not all of my children are serving God.

And I do not think that I should be set up as an example to a congregation, as a pastor and a leader of that congregation, if I cannot point to every member of my family and say, this is what your family should turn out like. So, I mean, I don't qualify. And yet I do feel like I qualify in many respects more than a lot of pastors I've sat under.

It's just, it's hard. It's really hard to find someone who meets all these criteria. And yet at the same time, like I said, even though it's hard to find even one, yet everything on this



should be true of all Christians.

This is not laying out some kind of a standard for a special category of ultra-dedicated people for whom requirements are stiffer than the requirements on ordinary Christian living. The fact of the matter is that all Christians fall short of the standard in some measure. You should choose elders who don't fall short as much as others do.

And the idea is that everything is set up, and elders really are what other people should be too. But the reality is that most Christians aren't living at these standards, and therefore elders should be selected who are as close to the standard as possible, or exactly added if possible, because they provide a role model for other Christians. You see, if you choose an elder who's somewhat less than perfect in one of these areas, then you set a role model that's less than what a Christian role model should be.

It's not to say that we should be highly critical of elders who fail to be perfect any more than we should be highly critical of other people who fail to be perfect. But the desirable goal is that the leaders of the church are the kind of people that if someone says, well, what should a Christian be like? Well, look at this. Here's some examples of what Christians should be like.

You know, these guys who are at the head of the church, as it were, that is, leading it, making decisions, teaching, feeding the church, they should be people who not only their work, but their example is a good example of what all Christians ought to aim at. And the fact that they have reached it more than the average Christian, hopefully, indicates that it is a reachable goal, and they may have some way of advising us on how to get there, too, because they've gotten there. So, the idea here is that an elder should just be a more consistent Christian than the average Christian.

That's all there is to it. Notice there's no reference to special scholarly training. There's no reference to, you know, training in hermeneutics and apologetics and homiletic theological training.

They do have to be apt to teach, but it's quite evident that some people who have theological training are not very able to teach. They don't teach well. And some people who have no theological training teach quite well.

So, obviously, the early church didn't need seminaries to produce pastors. As a matter of fact, in my understanding, they didn't even, you know, borrow pastors from other churches. Nowadays, common practice in churches is if the pastor resigns and dies or something happens, he falls in disgrace, and the church is looking for another pastor, they call another church of the same denomination, or they call headquarters.

In Springfield or somewhere, they say, Listen, we lost a pastor. Do you have one running around who needs a church? And they say, Well, we'll send three candidates, and you

pick one. You know, and so, you know, different guys come along, and they candidate for the position, and they're strangers to the church.

And somehow, on the basis of hearing one or two representative sermons, the pulpit committee has to decide, Is this guy going to be the next pastor for this church? And those are the kinds of ways, that's how decisions are usually made. And some churches go through new pastors every two or three years, because they pick a guy who all they know about him is they've heard two sermons when he was candidating, and, you know, he had two good sermons. You know, that's all he had.

And they pick him, and he turned out to be a good man. So they replace him, and three years later, another guy is chosen on the same basis. It's absurd.

As I understand it, the elders were chosen, that is the leaders, pastors of the church were chosen, from within the ranks of the congregation. Men who had a good reputation, whose character was known, who already were like elders to the people. They were already recognized as older, more mature, more consistent Christians, who already had exhibited some propensity to teach, and to give good counsel, and so forth, to the church.

And therefore, they were simply formally recognized. These are the guys that we're going to call our elders. These are the guys that we're going to give the duty of pastoring this congregation.

And therefore, they didn't have to bring in guys from outside. And by the way, some modern churches have realized the need for this, and some churches actually follow this policy now. It's still in the minority, but I have heard of and seen, and some churches, that have really made it their goal that they're not going to bring in, you know, replacement pastors from outside.

They're going to raise up leadership from within their own ranks, and that is, I think, according to the New Testament pattern. And it seems clear from what Paul says here, Timothy wasn't going to be candidating a few guys coming from Antioch, you know, who wanted the position of pastor of the church in Ephesus. There were men in Ephesus from which he was supposed to choose.

They were just members of the church at this point, but they were to be chosen because they were the model members. And therefore, they were to be given recognition as leaders in the church. Okay, well, let's take a fairly close look at the qualifications here.

A bishop, then, must be blameless, which suggests that you really can't find anything to criticize him about. There's really nothing you can say, or that even an unbeliever could honestly say against him. Now, you might say, well, that's asking an awful lot.

There's no perfect men yet. Though there are no perfect men, there are some men who

are mature and perfect enough that you really can't spot their faults. Their faults may be struggles in their minds.

You know, they may still struggle with mental sins or things like that, which they're working against. But basically, their outer character is a consistently good example. I know men like that.

I know men of whom I cannot find one fault with their character. Now, they know themselves better than I do. They know that they're not perfect.

They know their inner struggles and secret sins and so forth. But the point is, as far as anyone selecting them is concerned, there is nothing visibly wrong with them. Now, you might say a good hypocrite might get in the position then, because he may be a jerk inside and living a clean life on the outside.

But that's the point of picking someone from within the ranks of the church. It's harder to fool people if you live with them. And they watch you for years and years and years.

If you're really corrupt inside, it will begin to be reflected in some behavioral patterns. It's true, a pastoral candidate out of seminary who is unknown in the church may come and put on a good show for a few weeks and impress people that he's a good man for the job. And that's just the problem.

Hypocrisy is possible when it comes to judging by outward appearances. But it's less likely that person's going to get away with that. If he's a man who's one of the founding members of the church, he's been there for years and everybody watches him and he's known.

His family can be interviewed. In fact, should be. You should not pick an elder because he's a man of high economic standing in the community.

And that's many times what churches do. I mean, I hate to say that, but you know it's true too. Maybe you've been in a church like this.

If you haven't, you should be aware of it. There are churches that pick their elders on the basis of they are the leading civic leaders. They're the richest guys in the congregation or whatever.

And I don't want to say that there's ulterior motives for choosing these men, but a lot of pastors I've served under, not a lot, some, enough to make me know that they exist, have had the policy of when you see someone that you want to keep in the church, give them a position. Someone that you'd hate to lose from your congregation, give them a position that makes it harder for them to leave. And that's what they do.

And you will find some churches where every one of the elder positions is filled by

somebody who is in local politics, is an extremely successful businessman, or as Paul says, people who are not covetous, not greedy for gain, and yet some of the guys who are chosen for elders are chosen because they are covetous, and because they aren't greedy for gain, because they are affluent, and because they make a good show in the community, and they have a lot to offer to the church in terms of finances. I mean, that's not what it's supposed to be. Eric, do you have something to say? Yeah.

Yeah. And along with those three guys and their candidates, their two seminaries are their background history. I was by just one body, and, you know, even where I was last, I was by Joseph Jones.

Very true. You need to, I mean, a pulpit committee who is forced in the position of choosing a candidate for pastor obviously should look very carefully not only into how well he preaches when he visits your church to candidate, but why did he leave his previous church? What was the problem there? You know? You know, what were his relations like there? Because... Is there a problem about pulpit committees? No, there's no pulpit committees. The leaders of churches apparently were not chosen by pulpit committees, but were chosen by apostles.

That's another problem we have today. It's kind of hard to identify any living apostles, and therefore it's kind of hard to know any other way than to use pulpit committees or just general consensus of the church to choose others. For instance, the Mennonite church over here, which is no longer Mennonite now, they do it about as well, I think, as anyone can.

They have a Presbyterian form of government. The elders rule the church, as it were, and their policy is, when they feel they need elders, they suggest some names of men within the congregation that they think are among the most qualified. They circulate the names of the congregation.

They ask the congregation to pray about this, and ask the congregation for feedback. Could you affirm these men as leaders in the church? And if they get consistently positive feedback, then they tend to move forward and install the other. I think that's a good way to do it.

It's not as good as having an apostle to do it, but since we don't have an apostle locally in McMinnville, it's probably the next best thing. It's basically saying, will you people follow this man? If he's another, he's got to be a leader. Are you willing to follow him? Do you see his character and his spirituality being at a level that you could follow him? If so, if the church says yes, then there's a good chance that he qualifies not to be in that position.

Yes, sir. Okay, we'll get down to that. I really should move through these individually.

Yeah. Okay, let me do that. Blameless, then, suggests that there's no overt, visible misbehavior, no scandals in his life, nothing that really anyone could point the finger at and say, ah, you call that a Christian? An elder should be the kind of person that they could point at and say, you call that a Christian? You say, that's exactly what I call a Christian.

In fact, that's what Jesus called a Christian, that's what Paul called a Christian. He should be the best example of a Christian you can find. Secondly, the husband of one wife.

Now, this comes up early among the qualifications, though a little later he amplifies on the marriage life, the family life of this man. Verses 4 and 5, of course, amplify that, but early on he mentions that he should be the husband of one wife. Now, the meaning of this expression is far from agreed upon by Bible scholars.

There's a lot of different opinions. Some believe that Paul is saying the man should only have been married one time in his lifetime. In other words, he can't be divorced and remarried.

It's on the basis of this that certain denominations have a policy that no man can be a pastor in their church if he's been divorced and remarried, regardless of the circumstances. He's been the husband of more than one wife, and therefore he's not the husband of one wife. Others would argue that, but that doesn't make much sense, for example, if the man was widowed and remarried.

Certainly, the Bible teaches there's nothing wrong at all with being widowed and remarried, and there's no reason why that would be a bad example or in any way unholy or anything like that. In fact, the Bible sanctions remarriage of widows. Later in this chapter, he encourages the female widows to remarry, although he says the older widow should be the wife of one husband.

That's an interesting thing. We haven't gotten there yet, but in chapter 5, he talks about widows being supported by the church. He says, don't add them to the list unless they meet certain qualifications.

It looks like qualifications for elders, almost. Now, one of the qualifications is that the widow is over 60, and she has been the wife of only one husband. Now, if the wife of only one husband means in her whole lifetime she can have only had one husband, then Paul is doing no favor to the younger widows.

He says, remarry. He says, I counsel the young widows to remarry. Start a new family.

Because if they have to be widowed again after they've remarried, then they can't be supported by the church because they've not been the wife of only one husband. So, I suspect that Paul is not really saying that under no circumstances can they have had more than one spouse in their lifetime. I mean, for instance, if they've been widowed and

remarried, there's no block on their character from that.

There's nothing immoral about that. There's nothing even substandard about that. It may mean, and some would understand it to mean, not to apply to widowed men who remarried, but people who have had a second marriage illegitimately, perhaps they've divorced their wives, and in biblical times divorce was quite easy and on almost any grounds, sort of like today, and there would have been, no doubt, a lot of people converted who had been divorced on questionable grounds and yet remarried.

And therefore, the very fogginess that surrounded the legitimacy of their divorce and remarriage would make it not desirable to put them in front as examples to the church because there would be some question about the legitimacy of their second marriage. And so, he might simply be meaning they should not be the husband of more than one wife at a time, as it were. If the previous marriage was ended in divorce but not legitimately, they still have their first wife, in a sense.

And now they've remarried, now they have two wives. They may only be living with one, but in God's sight they have two, and that's wrong. If that is the correct interpretation, then a man who has been divorced on biblical grounds and remarried still only has one wife because the Bible indicates that divorce does end a marriage and a man does not still have a wife if he's been divorced on biblical grounds from her.

So, some would allow even divorced remarried people to still be considered husband of one wife in that they only have one wife at a time. And along the same lines of only one wife at a time would come the category of people who think he's forbidding polygamy among elves. Now, you might say it should go without saying that an elf shouldn't be a polygamist with more than one wife at the same time.

But it doesn't go without saying in the ancient world because there were no doubt some Christians who might aspire for ownership who did have more than one wife. Not to say that that's normative or good or right for Christians to do, but some of them may have been polygamists before they were saved. And when a person has had more than one wife, in a situation where that's legal and culturally acceptable and not forbidden even directly in the Scripture at all, and then they get converted, the Scripture does not give the church grounds to say you have to divorce all but one of your wives.

Only your first wife you can keep, the rest you have to put away. Even if you have children by the other wives and your first wife has been barren or whatever, you need to put away all but your first wife. The church cannot, with biblical warrants, require that.

Now, we don't have polygamists in this society, so it's not a problem we face here very much. But in some mission fields there is that problem. Christian missionaries have faced that on the mission field many times in tribal areas where the chiefs have, you know, 20 wives or 10 wives or something like that, and then they get saved.

What is the policy there? And different missionary societies have different policies about that. In my opinion, the chief should not, I mean, he should not divorce his wives. He's legally married to them.

Solomon and David were legally married to several wives. The Bible never says they had to divorce them in order to be right with God, nor Jacob, for that matter, or Abraham, for that matter, who had contribution. We have to assume that while polygamy is certainly not God's plan for marriage, and God never intended for people to be polygamists, yet he never outright forbade it.

And therefore, when a person who is in a subnormal marriage situation like polygamy becomes a Christian, it is a greater evil to require them to divorce wives that they've made vows to than to tell them, just be a faithful husband to the wives you've made vows to. I mean, polygamy is apparently not the ultimate evil, but it is certainly substandard, and Christians should not seek to be polygamists, and you should not put a polygamist Christian up as an elder because he presents a wrong standard to the church. Now you might say, but was polygamy really practiced in New Testament times? We know it was in Old Testament times, but we don't read of polygamy in the New Testament, really.

And so maybe, could Paul really be talking about this? I got a few quotes of interest from Barclay on this point. He quotes from an ancient document of the church called the Apostolic Canons. It's an apocryphal book.

It apparently carries some authority, though it's not canonical. It doesn't belong in the Bible. But it's called the Apostolic Canons, and it's from a very early period of the church, and it said, he who is involved in two marriages after his baptism, or he who has taken a concubine, cannot be an episcopos, or a bishop.

Now, so a very early church tradition, shortly after the time of the apostles, held that a person could not be a bishop if he had a concubine or two wives after his baptism. That certainly suggests that the early Christians interpreted Paul's words here as forbidding polygamy to an episcopos, to a bishop. Likewise, Barclay quotes Josephus, who of course was not a Christian writer, but a Jew of the first century.

And Josephus points out that polygamy was still practiced among Jews in the first century. He said, well, he basically said that some Jews still practiced polygamy. And Justin Martyr, a very early church father, said, and I quote him here, he said, it is possible for a Jew, even now, to have four or five wives.

So in the second century, when Justin Martyr wrote, and he was a church leader, he acknowledged that the Jews, not the Christians necessarily, but the Jews of his time, still practiced polygamy, even having four or five wives sometimes. Now, that tells us that the society from which the church was converting people, in many cases, was a

polygamous society. Josephus confirms it, Justin Martyr confirms it, and the apostolic canons suggest it.

Therefore, it is possible, and it seems like this is the way it was interpreted by the apostolic canons, that when Paul said that one hundred and one wives means only one at a time, that there may be some converts in the church who have more than one wife, but they should not be considered for eldership, because the elders should be a standard of what is normative for Christianity, and you should not put up as an example for others, a man who has several or multiple marriages. Eric, what's your hand up for again? It's like you meant the first century, back when society wasn't so debased, to maybe with their polygamous, but they didn't sleep with one, they didn't sleep with more than one. Did they sleep with people outside their, you mean, did they only sleep with one wife, but have several unofficial wives? No, like nine to five, stuff like that.

I really don't know. I mean, I don't know. I've read some things that indicate that both Jewish and Gentile society at that time were pretty debased morally.

I really can't speak too authoritatively on that, but I will say, from these quotes given, that there's strong reason to believe that polygamy was still an issue in society at the time when the apostles wrote, and if it was true in society at large, it would, obviously, since converts into Christianity were a cross-section of society, some would, no doubt, be polygamous people coming into the church. And Paul said that he should be a husband, not a wife. Now, of course, that doesn't settle the question.

People can make their own decisions. Some people may still feel like a person who's divorced and remarried is in violation here, even if their divorce is legitimate, and certainly a person is entitled to understand the passage that way, and many Christians have. I personally don't see it that way, but I myself am divorced and remarried, and I don't want to try to interpret the scriptures in favor of my own case, but since I'm not the least bit interested in being an elder, I'm not emotionally involved in this issue.

As far as I'm concerned, I would not object to Paul saying an elder must be the husband of one wife, meaning he cannot be divorced and remarried, because I, though I'm divorced and remarried, don't care to be an elder. But there are good men that I know who are divorced and remarried who I think are elders and belong in the eldership. And I do believe what Paul forbids here is polygamy among elders, not other things.

It also says temperate, which simply means self-control. I think that an elder or pastor should not be too overweight, because a person who's obese advertises himself as a glutton. He advertises himself as someone who is not self-controlled.

There's very few people who are obese because they like being obese. They usually are obese because, though they would like to be more moderate in their weight, they cannot control their eating. Obesity is almost always, though there are granular problems, some



people have, and so forth, and we have to take that into consideration, but that's more rare, I think, than some people like to think.

In most cases, obesity has to do with eating patterns. And most people have eating patterns that's, let's put it this way, most people would like to eat less, in a sense, and like to be thinner. And probably so in all societies, for the most part, at least today it is so.

But if they are not eating less, it's because they have not yet gained control over that area of their life. Now, that's not the greatest sin. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, according to Galatians 5, and a spiritual person exercises self-control, and that would include self-control over the appetites for food.

But failure in that is not the greatest failure available to a Christian. A Christian who's overweight may actually be more sanctified in many areas than someone who isn't. I'm not overweight, but I try to gain weight, and I can't.

I mean, my metabolism, I could be a glutton and you wouldn't know it. And it may be that someone who's overweight is actually more sanctified than I am, in some respects. So you can't judge everything by that, but the problem is, if you make a man a pastor or an elder who has manifestly not got the victory over his eating habits, that his appetite controls him, and he is not self-controlled.

Or, as Paul puts it in a very unflattering way in Philippians 3, his God is his belly. That is not a very good example of Christianity put forward. It gives opportunity for reproach, at least in our culture.

Now, in biblical times, maybe temperance had more to do with drinking habits or some other thing like that, or maybe sexual habits, and it would apply today that way, too. It may be that fat people were not regarded as problems. In fact, maybe people liked being fat in those days.

In some cultures, that's the way. But in our society, most people do not like to be fat. And if they are fat, it's because they're struggling, and they don't quite have the victory over eating habits.

That's just a fact. And, because of this, our society, the world, is critical of fat people. And anybody who struggles with their weight knows that.

The world, the Western culture, 20th century American culture, is critical of overweight people. This may be a wrong attitude for them to take, but it's still a fact. And therefore, if a pastor or elder is a fat man, he is probably going to not be blameless in the eyes of society.

People are going to say, yeah, he talks a good talk about giving up sin. He talks about

how I should give up my fornication, but he obviously can't give up his ice cream sundaes. So he's a hypocrite.

You know, I mean, he wants me to control my sex life, but he can't control his food appetite. And I think the criticism carries some weight. And while some of the Christians I know who I really respect in many ways are overweight, I have some very good friends who I am glad to have teach in this school and so forth, who have serious problems with their weight, and they do not have self-control in this area.

They should not be elders. They should not be put forward as model Christians in all respects, because an elder is supposed to be a model of someone who has control over his appetites in that way. Sober-minded.

And by the way, in some denominations, if you've been around in church circles in America, in some denominations, you'd almost conclude that being fat is a qualification for pastorship. And you may know which denomination I'm thinking of. I mean, there is a particular denomination that many of us are acquainted with that I don't think I've ever met, a pastor in that denomination who is not overweight.

It's almost like, you know, it's the mark of spirituality that you're prosperous and fat. And maybe in Old Testament times that was true. It doesn't seem to be true in our culture or in New Testament times.

And I think we ought to look again at these qualifications. Sober-minded. Now, sober-minded and of good behavior are pretty closely related.

It's clear that the Bible doesn't say that Christians have to never smile or never laugh or never tell a joke of any kind, although the Bible does take a dim view of foolish jesting. Paul talks negatively about foolish jesting in Ephesians. Again, I would not wish to become very legalistic about this, but it's an obvious fact that you can all acknowledge that jesting easily gets out of hand.

It soon becomes unedifying and unspiritual. There is a place for frivolity and glee and joviality and even humor that is not unedifying, that is not a problem, but humor has a way of taking charge of a social situation and eventually, usually the humor degenerates into put-downs of someone else or very frequently something that's a little off-color in terms of its moral implications and so forth. And an elder should be a person who's pretty sober.

Sober meaning he's not notable for his jokes and goofing around and practical jokes he plays. And I know some pastors who are. I know some pastors who are just boys in grown-up bodies and they like to do little practical jokes and so forth.

And I don't say that's bad for a Christian. I don't say a Christian can't do those things and still be a good Christian, but it's not the model. It's not the goal of the Christian life.

It is something that we should hope to outgrow. It doesn't mean we can never say things that have a humorous edge to them, because real life is humorous. Reality is humorous.

And to see the humorous side of life is not a bad thing. But a person who obviously is more or less his dominant character trait, personality trait, is that he wants to be known as a humorous person, is not yet very sober-minded. Gravity and sobriety are virtues that are advocated frequently in the Scripture and an elder must be known for his ability to see when seriousness is called for, and most of the time it is.

A person who jokes around incessantly probably is not very much in touch with spiritual reality, because there's a lot to be grieved about. Jesus said, Blessed are those who mourn. And even if God has given us joy, we should in some respect bear a burden for the lost world, as Jesus did.

And for the many suffering people around me, there should be something that tempers our joy. Not that it makes us less joyful, but it makes our expression of joy more appropriate in view of the fact there's a lot of people hurting in ways that we're not hurting. A lot of people died and going to hell, which grieves the heart of God, and it's really something worthy of weeping about.

And it's not wrong for us to, on occasions, you know, not have that prominent in our minds and to be, you know, cheerful and celebrating and so forth, but a Christian life should not be out of touch with those sobering realities. And it's rather hard to be merely jovial on a regular basis when you're very much in touch with those realities, when you become starkly aware of how much child abuse goes on, how many things that offend God are going on, how many people are dying who've never heard the gospel, and so forth. I'm not saying we need to, you know, try to make ourselves gloomy, but there is cause for sobriety.

There is cause to share the burden that God has on his heart for the way things are. And Jesus is never recorded as having laughed. Now, I believe he probably did laugh on occasions, but it is recorded that he wept on more than one occasion.

He is called a man of sorrows, according to the Greek. We don't have a record of him laughing. We do have some evidence that he was a joyful person in some respects, but he was also a man who carried a burden on his heart.

And, you know, when you think of the church fathers and the apostles, I don't think of them as guys who sat around telling jokes in their free time, you know. I mean, I think of them as men who were always concerned about the church. Paul said, besides all these sufferings I'm enduring outwardly, I carry continually the burden of the church on my heart.

He says, who stumbles and it doesn't grieve me, and I don't burn from it. You know, I

mean, he's a man who's got God's tires on his heart. He's not going to find a lot of leisure to just sit around and joke.

And he's going to be sober in general. Good behavior, of course, is fairly general, but probably meaning appropriate behavior, that which is mature and spiritual, rather than a lot of goofing around. Yes? I'm getting kind of confused, because when I come to passages that say, rejoice always, I'm told that I'm always supposed to be happy.

I don't know anything about this issue of needing to be smiling. But, I also don't know anything that says you shouldn't smile. Smiling, there's a whole variety of different kinds of smiles.

There are smiles that are simply pleasant. You know, they're just a pleasant, happy expression. There are other smiles that are snide, sneers, and, you know, just smiles associated with, you know, just responding to humor and so forth.

None of, I mean, some of them, more than one of them may be appropriate. As far as a general rule, I would say a Christian ought to have a pleasant expression. That need not necessarily always be smiling.

But a scowl is not very appropriate, I think. Because a joyful person, it'll show on his face, okay? You can rejoice in the Lord and not be very happy with your circumstances or with the circumstances of others. You can be grieved about many things, and yet, deep down inside, you've got fulfillment.

You've got contentment. You've got, you know, you trust in God. You shouldn't get under the circumstances emotionally.

But that, you know, you have grounds for being confused about this, because obviously you do kind of get mixed messages here. Christians ought to be joyful people, but they're supposed to be sober people. I don't know how to describe that more than just to show you an example of somebody who seems to have a good balance with that.

And I know people like that. I mean, think of, I mean, you might not know the same people I do, but just think of the pastor or the elders or mature Christians that you know that strike you as the most Christ-like. And in all likelihood, they strike a good balance between sobriety and cheerfulness.

You know, I mean, in my opinion, because there are some people I know best in the church and leadership in this town, I think the elders down here at Two Vine Church, where I don't attend anymore, but I think that for the most part, they're a good balance in this. I don't think they're men who joke very much. I mean, I mention it because probably you know, I mean, I know you know them.

And I would say that, you know, there's a case where guys, they're not overly somber or

morose, but they seem like serious-minded people. Yet, they don't seem sad and gloomy. I mean, they seem fairly cheerful.

I mean, they seem like they can enjoy a wholesome joke and, you know, and so forth. And they can laugh at things that are appropriate. But I don't know what to say more than that.

And to point to an example, I suppose there may be someone who could say it better than I do. I don't know exactly how to point out the correct balance between a cheerful and joyful Christian disposition and that which is brave and sober. But sober, certainly, when we think of sober, of course it's used figuratively here, but when we use the word sober in modern terms, we usually think of not drunk.

And, of course, sobriety doesn't just mean that here. But we might suggest that you can tell the difference between a sober man's behavior and a drunk man's behavior. And that may be a good way of judging what sobriety looks like in a person's life.

When a person is drunk, is somewhat out of touch with reality, he basically makes comments and has attitudes and emotions that are not appropriate to the situation. Whereas a sober man is more likely to act and think appropriately about things. And I think that might not be the final word that helps solve this problem for you.

But I think that a sober mind is one that is really in touch with reality. And not just what he's experiencing at that moment, but the realities that are in God's heart. What's going on in the third world? What's going on in our own society that grieves God's heart and stuff? And to lose touch with those realities is not desirable.

And yet to have a giddy sort of silliness in your attitude when there's people who are really hurting you next door, it seems very inappropriate. I mean, I consider myself a very happy person. I don't know if that shows enough.

But as far as when I think of how I am, I feel like I'm happy. I couldn't be happier. I really couldn't.

I can't think of anything that would make me happier than I am. At the same time, I don't want to spend a lot of time joking around, and I'm not saying I'm the example to look at, but I just feel like, I don't feel like I have any struggle with the problem between being happy and being sober. To me, I don't know if I strike the balance that other people should imitate or not, but in my own experience, I can read a man should be sober and a man should be cheerful, and not see that as some kind of a perplexing dichotomy.

I mean, I feel like there's a place for sobriety that's quite obvious, and a place for cheerfulness that's obvious as well. That's all I can say. I probably don't have as much as likely help on that, and maybe some of you have better jobs.

Hospitable. The word hospitality in the Greek actually means love of strangers. Though this hospitality of others may well refer to opening their home and their kitchens and so forth to traveling ministers who come through.

The reason I say so is because a very early document of the church called the Shepherd of Hermas, which dates from, I think, early in the second century, a very early Christian document, and somewhat authoritative, quoted frequently by Christians because of its early date and its legitimacy. The Shepherd of Hermas said this, The episkopos, or bishop, must be hospitable, a man who gladly and at all times welcomes into his house the servants of God. So, apparently, this very early Christian source interpreted this injunction of hospitality as meaning that he gladly and at all times welcomes into his house the servants of God.

In other words, being hospitable doesn't mean necessarily that he makes his house a flophouse for all the homeless people in town, although that might be a commendable thing to do. Hospitality is definitely something that's measured in degrees. I, for instance, when I was abandoned and I had my own home in the community, some people felt that I was not very hospitable.

I was actually criticized because some people thought I should be more hospitable. Well, in my mind, I was as hospitable as I needed to be. My home was open to anything.

Anyone who came to my door would be welcomed in and allowed to stay as late as they wanted to, or whatever. To my mind, my house was open, but some people judge hospitality by how many times you invite someone over for dinner. I didn't invite anyone over.

My house was a thoroughfare, a factory. I never had to invite anyone over. There was never a time to invite anyone over.

There was always someone there. It's less the case now that I live a mile from school. But the point is, different people have different ideas of what constitutes hospitality.

If you're not willing to make your garage into a room for the homeless to come in, some people say you're inhospitable. If you don't invite members of the church over... And how many times have you heard people in church criticize, the pastor's never had me in his home, the elders have never invited me over. To me, that criticism falls on deaf ears when I hear it.

Because I know what it's like to be a church leader, and what it's like to be a leader of a group. There's 200 people out there who all want to come to your home. But the pastor himself has duty almost every night of the week out of his home.

Then the few times he has free, his family expects a little time out of it. And there's very few times, and the same applies to staff here in many cases, there's very few times

when there's even the liberty to invite someone over. And if there is, it might be twice a month.

And how many months is it going to take to get through 200 people who all want to come in? You know what I mean? To me, I don't take very seriously people who say, the pastor's not hospitable because he's never invited me over. I know what a pastor does with his time. And I say, hey, your view of hospitality is a little unreasonable.

Apparently, from what we get from the Shepherd of Hermas, which is of course not scripture, but an early witness to how the early Christians understood this, apparently they understood the hospitality builder meant that he opened his home for traveling servants of God, who needed a place to stay as they were passing through. It's interesting, another early document from the same period of the church, called the Didache, which means teachings, another authoritative early document taught, I can't remember the exact specifics, but something like, if a traveling minister comes through, you should take him into your home for up to two days. But not for so long as three days, except under very extenuating circumstances.

If he stays longer than that, he's a false prophet, it says in the Didache. If he stays longer than three days in your home, he's a false prophet. He's a freeloader.

He's a charlatan. It's funny, because it was understood that traveling ministers could be expected to come through. But not everybody had an apostle resident in the church, or maybe not even excellent teachers, and so there were some guys who'd travel around in different churches on a circuit, and they would stay for a day or two, but if they stayed very long, strongly suspect they're a false prophet and they're freeloading.

So hospitality, again, some people think that hospitality means you invite people to live indefinitely in your home with you. That apparently wasn't the way the early church understood it. The idea is there are traveling servants of God coming to the church to minister to the church, and the episkopos should have his home should be readily available to put these people up while they minister and while they're there.

And that may not be all that Paul meant by hospitality, but that's apparently how the early church understood it, and they were probably right. Verse two, at the end it says he should be able to teach. Boy, oh, boy.

Not much needs to be said about that. I've already stressed how that Paul in these pastoral epistles talks about teaching as having a very high priority. The elders to be a teacher.

Now, not all of them apparently teach as much as others. Elders have a variety of duties, including administration and oversight of the deacons and oversight of the congregation and probably visiting the sick and teaching and preaching and so forth. A lot of times you

won't find one man who has time to do all those things, and that's why there was a plurality of elders in every church.

It was a team effort. It might be that one elder would spend more time visiting the sick, and another would spend more time administrating, and another might do most of the teaching. But all the elders should be capable of teaching.

The fact that not all of them taught in an equal degree seems clear from what Paul says in chapter five about elders. In chapter five, verse 17, he says, Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and teaching, or doctrine. Obviously, some elders did and some did not labor in the word and doctrine.

Some had more of a function in teaching than others, it would seem. Okay? Enough said on that. An elder should be able to teach out of it.

In fact, every mature Christian should be able to teach. Verse three, Not given to wine. Some translations say, Not addicted to wine.

By the way, there's a marginal note in the New King James that gives that as an alternative, not addicted to wine. Some people feel that Christians shouldn't drink alcohol at all. Others feel that while moderate drinking is alright for Christians in general, still Christian leaders should not drink any alcohol.

They have put out, for example, that the elders are said not to be given to wine, whereas later on when it talks about the deacons, it says they should not be given to much wine. Where is that? Verse what? Eight? Okay. Likewise, deacons must not be given to much wine.

Now, some have pointed out there's a difference between the elder and the deacon. The deacon is not to be given to much wine, which suggests he could drink a little, but not much. But the elder is simply not to be given to wine, which to some people means that he shouldn't drink any alcohol.

Now, frankly, I don't know if that's a legitimate difference to make or not. It does suggest, of course, that if the deacons are allowed to drink a bit but not much, and it certainly suggests that, if they're not to be given to much wine, it certainly suggests that some wine is permissible. It would still make sense that deacons might not have to live up to the same standard as an example that an elder does.

It would prove that wine itself is not a sin to drink in moderation, because if the deacons were allowed to drink at least in moderation, we cannot argue that drinking in moderation is a sin. But the elder might rightfully be required not to do certain things, even that are not sinful, just because of the example it would set, the testimony, and possibly the way it might stumble some people. In their society, as well as ours, there



were no doubt people addicted to wine.

And a man who was to be an example to the Christian body in general should probably be a man who doesn't stumble people about that, and doesn't drink at all. Now, I'm not saying that Paul is insisting on that, and I do not insist on it. If I hear of an elder who has a glass of wine with him, it does not stumble me, and I don't say he shouldn't be an elder.

But I'm saying that there is a good case to be made for a leader of the Church voluntarily abstaining from all alcoholic beverages. Essentially, that's what I've chosen to do, although I don't believe drinking is wrong. I've on rare occasions still had a glass of wine when it's served to me, but as a general rule, I don't drink.

And it's not because I think it's wrong to drink, but I simply don't think it's a good example to other Christians. And I think that's probably a good tact for the elder to take. Though, in fact, Paul may be saying nothing more than he shouldn't be addicted to wine, in which case he should be a man who drinks moderately, and there's room for that.

Not violence. Violence is inappropriate for Christians in general, but especially for an elder whose behavior is supposed to be immoral. It seems clear that some men who are elders... I don't know how savvy you are, I don't know how church-wise you are.

I've been in a lot of churches, and also in the leadership structures of a number of churches, and I'm maybe a little more aware than some of you of what kind of people form elderships in churches as a rule. It's not always as it should be. There are some churches, some elderships, where, as I said, the men are selected because of their social status in town, or their money, or because they jump through the hoops, and they play, they brown nose up to the other leaders, and they get selected, you know, they're clones of the other guys in power.

For some reason or another, people get in the eldership who don't belong there. And it's not uncommon for elders to be known, or to be discovered to be white beaters, or abusive to their children. I mean, you hear this from time to time, and it's absolutely not to be done.

Now, a lot of these things, the only way you'd really know whether men were like this, would be if you had seen them in their own home. I suggest that you should not, you know, start investigating a man's character and his home life at the time when you're considering him for eldership. Because if he knows you're considering him, he may be on good behavior when you visit his home.

It's much better to choose, as elders, men who you've been in their home when they were not being considered specific to their eldership, where they were not being specially trying to qualify as elders, when you get to see how they treat their wives and

their children at home, when you see how their children entertain themselves, how their children treat each other. I mean, basically where you get a slice of life. Where you can go in an informal situation, in a guy's home, pay him a visit, unscheduled or something, and you can sit down and talk to him a bit and just kind of see what's going on in the home.

Because in the home is where you're going to see the truest picture of a man's character. Not in the church. He's going to be on his best behavior in the church.

And if anything, people are in their worst behavior in their homes. Or, maybe not. They could be in their worst behavior when they're in absolute primacy.

But the worst, the social setting in which men really let their hair down and really act the way they really are most is in the home. And it's kind of hard for them to hide what goes on in their home. Even when you show up at the door, they start trying to put on a good show.

They can't hide the way their children have been raised. Because their kids are there. And their kids don't know how to put on a good show.

Even if they're told to. And you can definitely learn a great deal about a man's quality of behavior.