



September 13, 2026

Elders from Genesis to Revelation

God's Requirements for Elders

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9

1. Sermon Outline:

- a. God's Primary Requirements for Elders Focus on Christ-like Character
 - i. Elders should be "above reproach"
 - ii. A survey of the specific character requirements
 - iii. What if you believe an elder candidate doesn't meet one of these?
- b. Elders Must Also Be Able to Correctly Teach God's Word
 - i. An elder's main functional requirement is the ability to teach God's Word
 - ii. An elder needs to have spent some time living by the Word
- c. The Different Requirements for Elders and Deacons Help Us Better Understand Both Offices
 - i. The Bible recognizes 2 church offices with different responsibilities - elders and deacons
 - ii. Teaching isn't a requirement for deacons
 - iii. Character is the primary requirement for both, but the bar is higher for elders
 - iv. Scripture appears to support women serving as deacons, while that isn't the case for elders

2. *Sunday* – As soon as possible after the sermon, consider:

- a. What stood out to you the most in this sermon?
- b. What new truth did you learn, or what truth were you reminded of?
- c. Is there a particular Scripture passage you feel God is leading you to meditate on or commit to memory?
- d. What is one thing God is leading you to do after hearing this message?
- e. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?

3. *Monday*:

- a. Read the two focal passages: 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
- b. Based on these two passages from Paul, how would you, in a few words, describe the character of the individual he says is qualified to serve as an elder?
 - i. How likely do you think it is that any man would meet all of these qualifications perfectly? What would be required to enable anyone to do so (see Galatians 5:22-23 and Romans 8:4 & 13)?
 - ii. Think of all of the Old Testament heroes with whom you are familiar. Which ones would seem to meet these requirements?

- iii. Which of these requirements do you think should apply to individuals in secular leadership positions?
- iv. While these two lists are the qualifications for elders, which, if any, of the qualifications would you say are not also desirable characteristics in every Christian? Why?
- c. Meditate on 1 Timothy 3:1.
 - i. What do you think Paul means when he says that the phrase at the end of verse 1 “is trustworthy”?
 - 1. Do you think he is referring to a common statement that circulated in the early church or just telling us we can trust the words that follow?
 - 2. Compare this with other places he makes a similar statement: 1 Timothy 3:1, 4:9, 2 Timothy 2:11, and Titus 3:8. Why do you think he uses this statement so frequently in his Pastoral Letters?
 - ii. What does Paul’s use of the word “aspire” suggest should be true of someone being considered to be an elder? How do you think “aspire” (actually translated “desire” in the NKJV and others) differs from “desires” used a few words later?
 - iii. Why does Paul’s saying it is “a noble task” make it clear he is talking about a function and not a church office or position?

4. *Tuesday:*

- a. Read and meditate on 1 Timothy 3:2-3.
- b. What is the summary requirement for an elder? Although the qualifications that follow are very comprehensive, how might this summary qualification apply in modern situations that would not have been known when Paul wrote?
- c. What is the fundamental difference between the characteristics listed in verse 2 and those listed in verse 3? Where do you see parallel or amplifying description in the two verses?
- d. “Husband of one wife” has been interpreted in several different ways in our age. It might be understood to mean: 1) not have more than one wife at a time, 2) not remarry after divorce, 3) not remarry after the death of his wife, or 4) not be unfaithful or have an affair. What do you feel it means? What scripture supports your view? Does the fact that Paul is describing a person's character in this passage, not obedience to the law, change your view?
- e. The next characteristic, sober-minded, is translated “temperate” in the NIV, RSV, and NKJV. How does “sober-minded” present a more inclusive character description than “temperate”?
 - i. How does Paul include what we normally take “temperate” to mean in the list?
 - ii. Do you think that these verses can/should be used as Biblical justification for excluding some who drink alcoholic beverages in moderation from serving as an elder?
 - iii. How would the principles Paul is stating apply to the use of marijuana (in locations where its use is legal)?

- f. What would you feel presented evidence that a person was “a lover of money”? Imagine that you are an impoverished Christian living in a third-world country. How do you think you would view most American Christians?
- g. Of the other characteristics in these two verses, are there others that seem particularly difficult to understand or evaluate in a potential elder? What should you do about any such terms?

5. *Wednesday:*

- a. Read and meditate on 1 Timothy 3:4-7.
- b. In verses 4 & 5, Paul moves from character traits to a litmus test of an elder candidate's leadership. Why is an elder's household an appropriate measure of his ability to serve as an elder?
 - i. What aspects of home life do you think Paul has in mind when he says it must be managed well? What indicators would give evidence it was not being managed well?
 - ii. What do you think it means to keep children submissive “with dignity”? What would be a classic example of an undignified approach?
 - iii. How do you think this applies if the family has a rebellious teen who rejects all authority?
- c. How does Paul show in verse 5 that he is not equating the role of managing a household with the function performed by an elder? Where or how do you see “caring for God's church” as overlapping with management?
- d. How do you think a “recent convert” should be defined? Is it strictly an issue of time? How serious of an issue do you consider conceit (consider Proverbs 21:4, 1 Timothy 6:3-4, & 2 Timothy 3:2-4)?
- e. Why is “a good reputation with outsiders” important? How does that old expression, “Don't just talk the talk, walk the walk,” apply?

6. *Thursday:*

- a. Read and meditate on Titus 1:5-9.
- b. As you read verse 5, how would you summarize the task Paul gave to Titus?
 - i. The only record in the Bible of Paul being on the island of Crete is in Acts 27:7-15. Do you think this could have been when Paul left Titus? Why or why not?
 - ii. What does the verse tell us about Paul's priorities (consider also 1 Corinthians 14:33 & 40 and Colossians 2:5)? What application do you think this should have in churches today?
 - iii. In the ESV, verse 6 continues the sentence started in verse 5 and begins with an “if,” but there is no associated “then.” Why do you think this is?
 - 1. Is Paul providing a qualification to Titus that would make appointing an elder difficult or impossible in some towns?
 - 2. How do you think Paul would have answered the question: Is it more important to have elders in every church or to only have qualified elders?

7. Friday:

- a. Read and compare 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, paying particular attention to the qualifications described for elders in each passage.
 - i. Which qualifications are identical?
 - ii. Which qualifications are similar but described differently? Is the difference significant? Why or why not?
 - iii. Which qualifications are unique to only one passage?
- b. Verse 6 contains a qualification related to an elder's children, which is somewhat difficult to understand. How does Paul's instruction to Titus about children differ from what he tells Timothy?
 - i. Do you think keeping one's children "submissive" is essentially the same as their not being known for debauchery or insubordination?
 - ii. What about the requirement that they be believers? Can any parent control a child's decision to believe or to reject Christ? How do Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Ephesians 6:4 affect your answer?

8. Saturday:

- a. Read the two focal passages again, thinking about how well you measure up against these standards. Are there areas where you know you are falling short? While you may not aspire ever to be an elder, how do these shortfalls influence your walk as a Christian? If any of the shortfalls constitute sin, what are you doing about it (see 1 John 1:9)?
 - b. Titus 1:9 requires an elder to "give instruction in sound doctrine," but 1 John 4:1 tells us to test every spirit because there are many false prophets. What standard must be used (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17)? Where does this suggest elders and all Christians should focus their reading?
9. **Application:** When we become a Christian, we are "born again" (John 3:3 & 5), and as a new creation, the old has been replaced by the new (2 Corinthians 5:17). That specifically includes a new heart, or in modern terms, a new character. Paul describes the character and resulting lifestyle of someone who is to serve as an elder. But that should be the character and the lifestyle of every Christian, or at the very least what they are striving to become. While none of us will achieve that perfection on this earth, nor will any elder, our daily goal should mirror what Ephesians 4:15 states.
10. **Pray:** This week, please pray for these three unreached people groups identified in the IMB "Loving the Lost Prayer Guide:
- a. Tucano of Colombia: Tucano (too-CAH-no) people live deep in the Amazon regions of Brazil and Colombia. They spend their days fishing, hunting, foraging, and harvesting what plants they have been able to cultivate in their small communities. The Tucano believe in the Anaconda Ancestor and in a system of three worlds: sky, earth, and underworld. They live in constant fear, seeking to appease and control the spiritual forces around them that they believe determine their well-being or destruction in every aspect of their life. The community also reveres certain leaders who practice sorcery.
 - b. Tutung of Brunei: The Tutung are a people group living in a slower-paced region of Brunei. For generations, they were fishermen and seafarers, but many have now traded their nets for better-paying jobs in larger cities. While their ancestors followed animistic beliefs, most Tutung today practice Islam. In Brunei, being Muslim is considered a lifelong identity —

from birth to death. Some Tutung still celebrate their indigenous traditions alongside Islamic practices, creating a blend of the two belief systems. The more beliefs and traditions they cling to, the harder it seems for them to let go and embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ.