

Respectable, Well Thought of by Outsiders, and Hospitable

This morning we want to continue our series of studies on the qualifications of an elder, or the qualities that should be looked for in an elder of the Lord's church. I'd like to thank the brothers who have already presented lessons in this series. I think they've done an excellent job. I must admit, in the beginning it seemed a rather intimidating task, to stand before the congregation and try to expound on each of these qualities beyond the obvious, face-value meaning, even though the leaders have been studying them for several months now. But I've learned a great deal, and I hope that something I have to share will be beneficial to us all.

I want to remind you of something mentioned in the first lesson in this series. And that is that while these qualities are listed as characteristics that must be expected of an elder, MOST of these qualities are also characteristics that should be expected of ALL Christians. In other words, these behaviors and attitudes, for the most part, should be the STANDARD for us all. It's not that elders only must live up to these values. It's that an elder should be an example to others in how to live these qualities out in our everyday lives. While some of these characteristics may not be REQUIRED of all Christians...for example, it's not required that all Christian men be married or have children. However, those that are married are expected to be faithful husbands, and those that do have children are to fulfill their role as a godly father. And multiple passages through the New Testament teach us that we ALL should be sober-minded, self-controlled, and so on.

And such is the case with the 3 qualifications that we're going to study this morning: the requirements that an elder must be respectable, well thought of by outsiders, and hospitable. Those characteristics, as we'll hopefully see as we study each one...they're required of ALL Christians. No one should say, "Well, I don't have to be respectable...I don't have to be well thought of...I don't have to be hospitable because I'm not an elder." That would be silly, and would be contradictory to other scriptures. I say all that to say this: In case you might be tempted to "check out," so to speak, from the lessons in this series. To think to yourself, "Well, this doesn't apply to me." On the contrary, it does! First, because if the members of a congregation are to choose men to lead them as elders, they need to make sure they understand these qualifications. If they are going to "buy in" to the agreement to follow and be led by these men, then they need to make sure they are choosing wisely. But secondly, because as we study these qualities individually, hopefully we are learning how we ALL can grow and become better Christians...the Christians that our Lord wants us to be, and that the world needs to see in order to be led to Christ.

With that in mind, let's begin by reading the passages in which we find the qualities under consideration this morning. In **1 Timothy 3:1-7** we read [from ESV]...

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ²Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not a drunkard, not violent

but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

And in **Titus 1:5-9** we find...

⁵ This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— ⁶ if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷ For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

As we've noticed before, Paul did not list these qualities in the same order in his two letters, nor are the qualifications identical. In other words, there are qualities mentioned to Timothy that were not specified to Titus, and vice versa. As well, different translations and versions make it difficult to line up the qualities between the two lists. Here is one attempt to do that, taken from the ESV Global Study Bible: <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/chart-54-03/>.

As you can see, only one of the qualities we want to study this morning is listed in both epistles: that an elder must be hospitable. The fact that an elder must be respectable and well thought of by outsiders is not specifically named in Titus, although those qualities could certainly be reflected in others such as “upright” and “holy.”

Let's begin with a closer look at the quality of being “respectable”...

Respectable

Paul tells Timothy that an elder of the church must be respectable (as translated in the ESV). The Greek word used here is *kosmios*, which has been defined as conduct that is "well-arranged, seemly, decent, proper, modest, respectable, living with decorum, a well-ordered life." Several other versions or translations use the word “respectable,” including the ESV, NIV, NASB, and NRSV. Other versions have in place of “respectable” words or phrases such as:

- “of good behavior” (KJV, NKJV)
- “orderly” (ASV)
- “have a good reputation” (NLT)
- “dignified” (RSV)

I understand that this same Greek word is used only once elsewhere in the New Testament, and that's in 1 Tim. 2:9, where Paul is speaking of the dress and conduct of women. There the ESV says, “that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel.” Of course, most of us are more

familiar with the KJV translation of “modest apparel.” But I think we learn something here, that this word, in the original Greek, carried with it not only the idea that a woman’s clothing should properly conceal her body, but also that it should be respectable, decent, well-arranged, and should not damage her good reputation. Perhaps that’s a study for another time...

Back to the topic at hand, I found it very interesting that the Greek word that is used here by Paul to describe an elder’s behavior is where we also get the word “cosmos” in reference to outer space. When we stare into the nighttime sky, or when we get a better look with a telescope, we see the beautiful, orderly nature of the universe and all of its parts. Contrary to popular belief, there’s no way this could have all happened by chance or out of chaos. Such order requires planning and purpose. And in like manner, a person who is “respectable” does not become so by accident, nor without much work and discipline.

Allow me share some interesting thoughts by commentators on this qualification of elders:

- In reference to “respectable,” Adam Clarke wrote: “A clownish, rude, or boorish man should never have the rule of the Church of God; the sour, the sullen, and the boisterous should never be invested with a dignity which they would most infallibly disgrace.”
- Albert Barnes said of the word translated as “respectable”: “The most correct rendering, according to the modern use of language, would be, that he should be 'a gentleman.' He should not be slovenly in his appearance, or rough and boorish in his manners.”
- Matthew Henry notes that this qualification carries with it the idea “of good behavior, composed and solid, and not light, vain, and frothy” Now I have to admit, that last word caught me off guard. What does it mean to be “frothy”? Well, you know what the froth on top of a root beer or cappuccino is like. It’s light and airy...basically just a lot of small bubbles. Similarly, a person who is “frothy” is light and entertaining, but of little substance.

Some have also noted that the two preceding elder qualifications Paul gave to Timothy...that he must be sober-minded and self-controlled...those qualities mainly refer to the inward man, while this one (respectable) refers more to external manners – the outward man. It relies heavily on a man’s visible conduct and how others perceive the man. So we see that a man who desires to be an elder must have qualities both inside and out that qualify him as a shepherd of God’s people.

Speaking of how others perceive him, this quality of being “respectable” and “of good behavior” is closely related to the next qualification that we want to consider. In 1 Tim. 3 verse 7, Paul says that an elder must be...

Well Thought Of by Outsiders

While the qualification of “respectable” in verse 2 certainly must include one’s reputation in the eyes of others (perhaps both inside and outside of the church), Paul felt it necessary to “circle back,” if you will, and make sure the point was made how important it is for an elder to have a good reputation specifically among those outside the church.

The Greek word that Paul uses here is *martyria*, which, according to Strong, carries the idea of one's "record, report, testimony, or witness." Various versions translate this word as...

- "a good report" (KJV)
- "a good testimony" (NKJV, ASV)
- "a good reputation" (NASB, NIV)
- "well thought of" (ESV, NRSV)
- "people...speak well of" (NLT)

This Greek word is used many times (at least 32, by one count) throughout the Bible. It is used in a legal sense, as in testimony before a judge. It's used in a historical sense, such as when John, as an eyewitness, confirms his testimony about Jesus. And here in 1 Tim. 3:7, it is used in an ethical sense, as in the testimony concerning one's character. According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon, the word is used in this sense in 3 John 12 in reference to Demetrius. There John writes, "Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true." It can also be used in a negative sense, such as in Titus 1:13, where Paul confirms what's been said about the Cretans being "liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." Paul says, "This testimony is true." So we see that the idea here is a person's reputation. But it's a reputation based on facts...not just whether or not people like the man. I found it interesting that this word *martyria* is closely related to the word "martyr" – someone who gives their life because of what they believe to be true.

It's obvious why a good reputation among members of the church would be required of a man who would be shepherding the church. But as we said, Paul included this qualification, it seems, for a more specific reason. He says an elder must be well thought of by outsiders! That is, by those outside the church. Why is that? What business is it of those who are not even members of the body of Christ, much less the local congregation who is choosing its leaders? Why should anyone outside the church have any bearing or say in the matter?

You've probably heard the popular phrase, "We're in the world, not of the world." That's based on several passages. One is 1 John 2:15-16, where John urges us, "¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world." Also, on several occasions when Jesus said that neither He nor His kingdom were "of this world." However, I'd like to point out something that perhaps this popular saying misses. In John 17, Jesus is praying for His disciples. He says in verses 14-16, "¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world." But then notice what He says in verse 18: "¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world."

While we know that we are not "of the world," the Lord has sent us "into the world." And He still wants us to shine as "lights" (according to Matt. 5:13-16). He still wants us to "live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18) in order to have the greatest possible influence. Notice some other passages that support this truth:

- 1 Cor. 10:32 – “Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God”
- Phil. 2:15 – “that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world”
- Col. 4:5 – “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.”
- 1 Thess. 4:12 – “o that you may walk properly before outsiders”

And so, in his instructions to Timothy about what is required of an elder, Paul wants elders to be good citizens, good neighbors, good employees or employers—men who will not attract any outside criticism of the church. Commentator B.W. Johnson says of this verse, that an elder must "have an established character which speaks well for the church among the unconverted." Charles Erdman says an elder “must not only be favorably known by his fellow Christians, but he must also have a good reputation in the community where the church is located; otherwise his ill repute may bring...disgrace [or] attack upon the church.”

As you look back over the qualities and qualifications mentioned in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, think about how many of these can be seen and “well thought of” in a man’s life by those outside the church. “He’s a good husband. He’s a good father. He’s respectable, self-controlled, hospitable. He’s not violent, quarrelsome, greedy, arrogant. Not a drunkard.” Most if not all of these qualities can and should be seen not only by members of the church, but by people that the man might come into contact with in his everyday life. And if we reverse any of these qualities, it’s easy to see what a “bad” report or testimony looks like.

Bro. Dale Wellman, in a July 2020 article in Christian’s Expositor Journal, made the following observation about this qualification:

If the local congregation were to ordain a man that the community, his workplace, or even his extended non-Christian family considers to be unfit and a poor example of Christianity, how will that possibly help the church in its outreach? It will certainly *not* help but will only drive people away. I’m sure we’ve all heard stories of folks who said something like, “Well, if so-and-so goes to that church, I’m not interested in anything they have to say!” How much more so, if “so-and-so” is chosen to be a *leader* at that church?

By the way, I highly recommend Bro. Dale’s article on this topic, as well as Bro. Glen Osburn’s article on the next qualification we want to notice...

Hospitable

Not that it makes it any more important than the others, but recall that this quality is specified by Paul in his instructions both to Timothy and Titus. In fact, the idea and expectation of hospitality among God’s people is found throughout both the Old and New Testaments, as we’ll notice in a moment.

The Greek word translated as “hospitable” in our texts is *philoxenos*. It comes from two Greek words: *philos*, meaning “friend” and *xenos* meaning “stranger.” So the word hospitable quite literally means “a friend of strangers.” There’s not much variation among translations. We find...

- “hospitable” (ESV, NKJV, NASB, NRSV, NIV)
- “given to hospitality” (KJV, ASV)
- “enjoy having guests in his home” (NLT)

I think that last translation is how we most often think of the word hospitable. As in, inviting a friend over to our home for dinner. And that’s part of it. But when Paul wrote these words, and perhaps even more so when hospitality is spoken of in the Old Testament, it was more than just an occasional dinner invitation. And more importantly, it was extended to more than friends and relatives. All the way back to Gen. 18, we see Abraham practicing hospitality when he invited the 3 strangers into his home, and he was blessed for his kindness. Job said, “the sojourner has not lodged in the street; I have opened my doors to the traveler” – Job 31:32. In Leviticus 19:33-34 (NKJV), we find God including hospitality in the laws given to Moses and the children of Israel: “³³ And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. ³⁴ The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself.”

Notice again the root meaning of the word – “friend of strangers.” What does it mean to be someone’s friend? Well, I think Jesus answered that question in His parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10. You recall that, in reference to the command to love your neighbor as yourself, a lawyer asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus answered by telling the story of a man who fell among thieves who stripped him and beat him and left him half dead. A priest, and then a Levite who came along both passed by on the other side to avoid him. But a Samaritan saw him and had compassion. He treated his wounds, brought him to an inn, and took care of him, paying the innkeeper to continue his care even after he travelled on. I can’t think of a better example of being a “friend of strangers.”

The word hospitable or hospitality can be found several times in the New Testament. In Romans 12:13, Paul lists among the marks of a true Christian to “Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.” Peter urges Christians to “Show hospitality to one another without grumbling” (1 Pet. 4:9). Among the requirements for a widow to be supported by the church is that she “has shown hospitality” (1 Tim. 5:10). And the writer of Hebrews makes a very compelling plea when he says in Heb. 13:1-2,

Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” I must admit, I cannot explain that last part, but nevertheless, I think it stresses the importance of showing hospitality.

Hospitality is a visible sign of the attitudes of love, selflessness, and humility that any leader should exemplify. Phil. 2:3-5 says, “³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.” And when Jesus described the Day of Judgment, and the actions of those on the right who will be separated to inherit the kingdom of His Father, He included “I was a stranger and you took me in.”

In an article concerning hospitality, brother Glen Osburn had an interesting observation that, I think, further shows the importance of hospitality. He said, speaking of the early church:

Evangelism often emanated from the home. Some Christians historically practiced hospitality “to strangers” by going to the village well or water source and inviting travelers, who were there looking for lodging, home with them. This ultimately led to Christians being able to share the gospel with those who would accept the invitation to their home. Hospitality contributed to the spreading of the gospel worldwide.

Closing:

In closing, let me stress again that the qualities we’ve noticed in our study today are ones that are expected of ALL Christians – not just elders. We all have the responsibility to live good, orderly, respectable lives. We all have a circle of influence – friends, co-workers, acquaintances – and as is often stated, you or I might be the only (or best) chance that someone will ever have to learn the truth of the gospel. So we must guard our reputation. And we all have the responsibility to help those in need, including showing hospitality.

But as we’ve already stated, elders are to model what is expected of all Christians. They are to live an exemplary life that illustrates the mature, full-grown character of Christ. That doesn’t mean they’re perfect. They may naturally be stronger in some of these qualities than others. Even the apostle Paul admitted he was still growing and improving. But I hope we can see and agree that the characteristics we’ve studied today are crucial to being the kind of leader that the Lord’s church needs and deserves.

Sermon by: James Smith

Sources:

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