

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, January 31, 2024 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



TITUS STUDY

“Tough Grace in a Difficult Place”

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER IN LEADERSHIP

Titus 1:6-9

“⁵For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.” – Titus 1:5 (NKJV)

“⁶If a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation (debauchery, degeneracy) or insubordination (disobedience, rebelliousness). ⁷For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, ⁸but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, ⁹holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” -Titus 1:6-9 (NKJV)



BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TITUS:

- (1) **Author: Apostle Paul** - Authorship by the Apostle Paul (Titus 1:1) is essentially uncontested.
- (2) **Date: A.D. 62-64** - Titus was written between A.D. 62–64, while Paul ministered to Macedonian churches between his first and second Roman imprisonments,
- (3) **Literary Type: Pastoral Letter** - Along with 1, 2 Timothy, these letters to Paul’s sons in the faith are traditionally called “The Pastoral Epistles.”
- (4) **Place of Origin: Nicopolis** – Paul wrote this letter most likely from Nicopolis in Macedonia (some have suggested that the letter might possibly have been written from Corinth. (cf Titus 3:12).
- (5) **Recipient: Titus** - This epistle is named for its recipient, Titus, who is mentioned by name 13 times in the New Testament. The title in the Greek New Testament literally reads “To Titus.” Titus, like Timothy, had become a beloved disciple and fellow worker in the gospel. Most likely, Titus served with Paul on both the second and third missionary journeys. Paul’s last mention of Titus (in 2 Timothy 4:10) reports that he had gone for ministry in Dalmatia—modern Yugoslavia. The letter probably was delivered by Zenas and Apollos. Although Luke did not mention Titus by name in the book of Acts, it seems probable that Titus, a Gentile, met and may have been led to faith in Christ by Paul before or during the apostle’s first missionary journey. **Later, Titus ministered for a period of time with Paul on the Island of Crete and was left behind to continue and strengthen the work.** After Artemas or Tychicus arrived to direct the ministry there, Paul wanted Titus to join him in the city of Nicopolis, in the province of Achaia in Greece, and stay through the winter. Because of his involvement with the church at Corinth during Paul’s third missionary journey, Titus is mentioned 9 times in 2 Corinthians, where Paul refers to him as “my brother” (in 2 Corinthians 2:13) and “my partner and fellow worker” (in 2 Corinthians 8:23) The young elder was already familiar with Judaizers, false teachers in the church, who among other things insisted that all Christians, Gentile as well as Jew, were bound by the Mosaic law. Titus had accompanied Paul and Barnabas years earlier to the Council of Jerusalem where that heresy was the subject.
- (6) **Setting: Crete** - Crete, one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea, measuring 160 miles long by 35 miles at its widest, lying south of the Aegean Sea, had been briefly visited by Paul on his voyage to Rome (see Acts 27:7-9, 12, 13, 21).+ He returned there for ministry and later left Titus to continue the work, much as he left Timothy at Ephesus, while he went on to Macedonia. He most likely wrote to Titus in response to a letter from Titus or a report from Crete.
- (7) **Occasion: Pastoral encouragement and counsel** - Like Paul’s two letters to Timothy, the apostle gives personal encouragement and counsel to a young pastor who, though well-trained and faithful, faced continuing opposition from ungodly men within the churches where he ministered. Titus was to pass on that encouragement and counsel to the leaders he was to appoint in the Cretan churches.
- (8) **Theological Themes:** In contrast to several of Paul’s other letters, such as those to the churches in Rome and Galatia, the book of Titus does not focus on explaining or

defending doctrine. Paul had full confidence in Titus' theological understanding and convictions, evidenced by the fact that he entrusted him with such a demanding ministry. Except for the warning about false teachers and Judaizers, the letter gives no theological correction, strongly suggesting that Paul also had confidence in the doctrinal grounding of most church members there, despite the fact that the majority of them were new believers.

Theological/Doctrinal Themes Affirmed in Titus:

- 1. God's sovereign election of believers (Titus 1:1-2)**
- 2. His saving grace (Titus 2:11, 3:5)**
- 3. Christ's deity and second coming (Titus 2:13)**
- 4. Christ's substitutionary atonement (Titus 2:14)**
- 5. The regeneration and renewing of believers by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5)**

God and Christ are regularly referred to as Savior in Titus, and the saving plan is so emphasized in that it indicates the major thrust of the epistle is that of equipping the churches of Crete for effective evangelism. This preparation required godly leaders who not only would shepherd believers under their care, but also would equip those Christians for evangelizing their pagan neighbors, who had been characterized by one of their own famous natives as liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons. In order to gain a hearing for the gospel among such people, the believers' primary preparation for evangelization was to live among themselves with the unarguable testimony of righteous, loving, selfless, and godly lives in marked contrast to the debauched lives of the false teachers. How they behaved with reference to governmental authorities and unbelievers was also crucial to their testimony

Quotes about Those God Uses:

Listen to each quotes and respond. What do you think, in your words, think the quote is saying? Do you agree with the quote? Why or why not? There are no wrong answers

- ***“God does not begin by asking us about our ability, but only about our availability, and if we then prove our dependability, he will increase our capability.” – Neal A. Maxwell***
- ***“God doesn't use the most talented, the most beautiful, the wealthiest or the strongest, but those who are willing to yield their will to his.” – Pastor Rick Warren***
- ***“God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called.” - Mark Batterson, “The Circle Maker”***
- ***“God doesn't call the equipped, He equips the called.” – Anonymous***

“²⁶ For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. ²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to

put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the ^[m]base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence. ³⁰ But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— ³¹ that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.” – 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 (NKJV)

As believer/Christians, our desire ought to be, “to be used” ... for God to use us. Our passage is really about the kind of men (women) God uses. In this case it is specifically about those God would use to lead churches on the Island of Crete in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea under Titus’ Holy Spirit led direction (as directed by Paul).

The list in the following passage means that God has specific qualifications for leaders in the church. Leaders should not be chosen at random, or just because they volunteer, or because they aspire to the position, or even because they are “natural leaders.” Leaders should be chosen because they match the qualifications listed here. It is fine if a man thinks he is “called.” Yet he must also be qualified.

The qualifications for leadership in the following passage have nothing to do with giftedness. Paul didn’t say to Titus “Find the most gifted guys.” We might say that it is easy for the Lord to grant gifts by the Holy Spirit as He wills (1 Corinthians 12:11), but developing character takes time and a real relationship with Jesus Christ.

Going to seminary doesn’t make one qualified for spiritual leadership.
 Being a good talker doesn’t make one qualified for spiritual leadership.
 Natural or spiritual gifts in themselves do not qualify one for spiritual leadership.
 What one gives in money or volunteer time does not qualify them for spiritual leadership.
 What qualifies a man for spiritual leadership is godly character— and godly character established according to the clear criteria Paul will list.

However, this is not a rigid list which demands perfection in all areas. It provides both goals to reach for and general criteria for selection. We should take this list and ask “Does the man in question desire all these things with his whole heart? Does that desire show itself in his life?” Titus was to take the following list, find the men who best fit the description, and then use the list as a training guide to disciple these men.

As well, these qualifications are valuable for every person — not only those who aspire to leadership. They are clear indicators of godly character and spiritual maturity; they can give a true measure of Christian man and woman... that makes this study very applicable to each of our lives whether we are in a leadership position or not... and there is a sense in

which every Christian is to be “leading” their family, their world, those around them to Christ. These leading character qualities are important for that purpose.

As we saw last week, the apostle Paul had left Titus on Crete to correct some of the problems in the fledgling churches there. One of his primary prescriptions to get the churches on a solid foundation was to appoint godly leaders to lead believer to be godly believers who exhibit a solidly Christian character. I wonder what would happen if the evangelical churches in America would apply Paul’s prescription by removing unqualified men from office and installing godly men as church leaders. Churches would lose a lot of people, but maybe God would bless us with genuine revival!

We also saw that Christ runs His church through a plurality of spiritually mature men, called elders or overseers (pastors), who shepherd His flock. These men are not elected in the popular sense of that term, but rather are officially recognized by the church by virtue of their meeting the qualifications that are given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and here in Titus 1:6-9. Thus it is vital for the health of the church that we all understand these qualifications and apply them carefully in officially recognizing elders.

The two lists (1 Timothy 3 & Titus 1) are very similar. I do not know why they are not identical, and have not read anyone who answers that question, but let me quickly point out the difference:

“¹This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. ²A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; ³not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; ⁴one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence ⁵(for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); ⁶not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. ⁷Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” – 1 Timothy 3:1-7

“⁶If a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation (debauchery, degeneracy) or insubordination (disobedience, rebelliousness). ⁷For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, ⁸but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, ⁹holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” -Titus 1:6-9 (NKJV)

5 Interesting Facts of Comparison of the List in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1:

1. The lists in both cases are not meant to be **exhaustive** -
2. Five items in 1 Timothy are **lacking** in Titus –
3. Titus adds five items **lacking** in 1 Timothy -
4. The significant thing about both lists is that except for the ability to teach God’s Word, both lists focus **exclusively** on **godly character**, not on spiritual gifts or other abilities – Remember God is not nearly as interested in our ability as our availability
5. Both lists begin with “**above reproach**” and both lists emphasize the home front – Our first and primary focus on living the Christian life and setting a Christ like example in teaching and training

Before we examine the list, let’s take note of a few important observations about these qualifications...

A Few Things to Note About Spiritual Maturity:

- (1) **Note that these qualities are prescribed elsewhere in the Bible for every believer (including women)** - The majority of these qualities are prescribed elsewhere in the Bible for every believer, including women. They describe a spiritually mature person.
- (2) **Note that spiritual maturity takes time and effort** - Also, **note that spiritual maturity takes time and effort**. You cannot have some dramatic experience and become instantly mature. As Paul told Timothy (1 Tim. 4:7), “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.” It’s an athletic metaphor, and as we all know, to succeed as an athlete requires discipline over the long haul.
- (3) **Note that no one meets these qualifications perfectly** - We need to keep in mind that no one meets all of these qualifications perfectly. These are lifetime goals and no one can say, “I’ve got them all down perfectly.” But the one who is recognized as an elder in the local church should not have any glaring violations. Their overall character should reflect spiritual maturity.

We can group these qualifications under three headings:

3 Headings for the Qualification in Titus 1:6-9:

- (1) **Spiritual character on the home-front** - Verse 6 focuses on spiritual maturity in the home.
- (2) **Maturity in personal character** - Verses 7-8 on maturity in personal character.
- (3) **Maturity in sound doctrine** - Verse 9 on maturity in sound doctrine.

The qualification for being an elder is spiritual maturity as reflected in all areas of a believers life and in his personal character.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER REFLECTS SPIRITUAL MATURITY ON THE HOME FRONT (1 Timothy 1:6)

The term “above reproach” is used in 1:6 and 1:7, first to sum up a one’s home life and again to sum up his personal character. The Greek word in Titus is different than the word in 1 Timothy 3:2, although the meaning is essentially the same. It means that there is nothing in the believer’s life for which a charge or accusation could be brought against him (see R. C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* [Eerdmans], p. 381). This is a person of integrity. This believer doesn’t live one way at church and another way at home. Their family (spouse, children, those in the home) would affirm that this one displays the fruit of the Spirit at home. It doesn’t mean this one is perfect or never makes mistakes, but if he sins, he is quick to confess it and ask forgiveness.

An added note: this quality mentioned in both 1 Timothy 3 list and the Titus list with it’s accompanying traits (we’ll talk about in a moment) have often been a cause to prompt a sense of needless remorse, grief and shame on parents of children who have prodigaled their life or drifted away. These parents are often filled with such grief and sadness, even brokenness for their children, and often the church fails them by heaping on the weight of their burden by using these verse (and others) to suggest that somehow they are disqualified because of it. Let me share a couple of important thoughts (I think based on Biblical truth) that should be kept in mind here...

3 Important Thoughts to Consider & Remember: (especially for those who may have wayward, rebellious, or children who turn away from the faith in some way)

- (1) ***There are no perfect parents, homes or children (not really, all are made of sinners) –*** Only those who, with God’s help, seek to honor Him in their sometimes challenging task of raising a family in today’s world. Every home and family have problem, with struggles, and ups and downs, with children who stray at times, and rebel at times, every home has a little dysfunction in it... that is the world we live in and why we need a Savior. **Those who pretend that they have none are fooling themselves or trying to fool others in a game of pretend. I believe this to be true.** Remember, as we said earlier, that no one meets these qualifications perfectly. We need to keep in mind that no one meets all of these qualifications perfectly. These are lifetime goals and no one can say, “I’ve got them all down perfectly.” But the one who is recognized as an elder in the local church should not have any glaring violations. Their overall character should reflect spiritual maturity.
- (2) ***We should never disqualify anyone who God does not disqualify in His Word –*** All through Scripture God used those whose children were pictured in His Word as wayward, rebellious, and shunned the faith of their fathers and mother: Adam & Eve’s son rebelled and murdered his brother, Issac’s sons were both rebellious of sorts and Esau was even more rebellious than Jacob, Jacob’s sons were rebellious and even sold their youngest brother (Joseph) into slavery and told their father he was dead, Eli’s sons wicked, Most of David’s children were rebellious and cause their father much grief, of course in the

New Testament we have the example of the prodigal son who rebelled against his father and even turned his to debauchery and wild living, yet God used that father as a picture of how God is a father who never give up on us and welcome us back with second chances. You see I believe that the example of Scripture is that God doesn't disqualify or refuse to use a father or mother just because of choices their children make. That leads me to the third thought that should guide us...

(3) ***Parents are not generally responsible for the decisions their children make as adults*** – THEY ARE (those 'now' adults are responsible)! *Although we may give our best and most prayerful and faith-filled efforts to raising our children, as parents we are not responsible for the decisions our children make as young adults and adults.* (I would add this caveat... in most cases, in cases of abuse, neglect or gross hypocrisy) Though it grieves our hearts when our children rebellion against a faith that we have sought to instill in them when they were young, they may drift and wander away. We all have a choice as to what we will do with God's invitation to join and follow Him. We may share our faith and try to live out our faith with our children, family members, co-workers, friends, neighbors, and others we encounter, but it always up to the individual... even our children... what they will do with it. It is not our job to save our children in the deepest sense of the word. We can't save anyone. Only Jesus saves, and our children have the same choice to make that that parents made at some point in their life. We may influence that decision on some level by living our faith before them, but the decision must be theirs. If they rebel and walk away, or choose a lifestyle that we don't approve of it is not a reflection of us although may parents will live their life wondering what they did wrong! That is, I believe, a needless and faulty, and unnecessary burden they are allowing the enemy to weigh them down with. As parents we are better to pour our efforts into loving them, praying faithfully for them, and pointing them to the reality of Christ and His abundant life in our own life. **The character qualities mentioned in Titus 1:6 and 1 Timothy 3:2-4 have more to do with the spiritual and Christ-like character we seek to live out in our home before our children and family than it does with how they may receive it or the choices they may make because of it.*

Under this general requirement of being above reproach, Paul specifies two areas in which it manifests itself:

"6 If a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation (debauchery, degeneracy) or insubordination (disobedience, rebelliousness)." -Titus 1:6

The equivalent in 1 Timothy 3:2-5 says it like this... "2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; 3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; 4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all

*reverence*⁵ (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?).”

In other words our Christian character ought be lived out first and primarily before our family, as an example to our family (spouse, children, family). Our Christian character should reflect on the home front as much as it does at church and in front of other believers.

2 Pictures of Character on the Home Front:

(1) **Fully committed to one’s spouse and life in moral purity** – Paul speaks of this character quality as *“the husband of one wife.”* We know that here he is speaking of the qualification that Paul was instructing Titus to look for in those who would pastor the church at Crete. He was literally saying that an elder must be a one-woman man. We take this instruction and apply it to leadership in the church for pastor’s, sometimes for deacons, and here we may apply to Christian character as well. It is what should be expected for the character of all believers.

The fact that this qualification is named first after *“above reproach”* or *“blameless”* both in Titus and in 1 Timothy 3, shows its importance. There have been a number of different interpretations of exactly what it means.

4 Different Interpretations: *“the husband of one wife”*

1. **Polygamy** - Some have claimed that it is a prohibition against polygamy (multiple-wives). While that is assumed, that is not the main thrust of the term.
2. **Remarriage** - Some of the early church fathers interpreted it to mean that if a man’s wife died, remarriage would disqualify him as an elder. But that view stems more from false asceticism (self-denial, austerity, abstinence) than from the Bible.
3. **Divorce** - Others have said that a man who has ever been divorced cannot be an elder. Most who hold this view limit it to divorce that occurs after salvation, but some apply it even to divorce that occurred before salvation. But Paul is focusing on a man’s present spiritual maturity, not at sins that he may have committed years ago. For example, what if a man used to be self-willed or quick-tempered or addicted to alcohol? Do these past evidences of spiritual immaturity prohibit him from ever becoming an elder? If so, then who could qualify? In other words, Paul is more concerned with present godly character than with past immature behavior.

**I don’t think any of those is what this passage, nor the one in 1 Timothy 3 are talking about*

4. **Faithfulness** - The term is literally, “a one-woman man,” and I think that it looks at his character... his faithfulness to his wife and his God. He is devoted to his wife alone. He is not a womanizer.
 - His thought life is under the control of God’s Spirit, so that he is not enslaved to lust.
 - He doesn’t give himself to pornography.

- An elder should be a man who has a track record of being above reproach in mental and moral purity.
- This means that a man who has never been divorced and has been married for 50 years may be disqualified from being an elder, because he has not brought his thought life under control.
- He is not a one-woman man.
- Or, a man who went through a divorce as a young man may have matured. He dealt with the sins that led to his divorce. He has been married faithfully to his current wife for many years, and he is mentally and physically faithful to her alone.
- He would be qualified on this requirement. Also, this requirement does not bar a single man from being an elder, as long as he is morally pure, including his thought life (see 1 Cor. 7:1-9).

This may be applied beyond a man, or an elder/pastor/deacon. This quality on the home front means that this one is fully committed to the wife or husband God has given them and is living faithfully, morally, purely in relationship to that one and they are seeking to live in subject and submission to the Holy Spirit in their thought life, and behavior a sexually pure life.

- (2) **Fully committed to living out one's faith before their children/family** - An elder must have children who are under control. *"...having faithful children (that is having children who listen to and obey their father) not accused of dissipation (debauchery, degeneracy) or insubordination (disobedience, rebelliousness)."* Again, this does not mean that an elder has to have children, but if he does, they should be under his control. But, this qualification also has spawned a lot of debate. Does the Greek word here mean "believing" (NASB, ESV, NIV) or "faithful" (NKJV)? Does it refer to children who are still under the father's roof, or does it also apply to adult children?

The view that all of a man's children, whether younger or older, must be believers, goes too far in that it puts on the elder the responsibility for his children's genuine conversion, which is beyond anyone's control. Many godly men have had children who have rebelled against God (1 Sam. 8:1-3, for example), in spite of the father's example and his conscientious attempts to bring the child to saving faith.

Some will cite Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it." They argue that if a child goes astray, it means that the father failed to bring him up properly. But that is to misinterpret that verse. The Book of Proverbs is not a book of ironclad promises, but rather a book giving general maxims about life. Generally, if you train a child properly, he will grow up to follow the Lord. But, there are exceptions.

As important as a father's example and training are, ultimately salvation is a supernatural act of God. While He uses godly parents in this process, no actions on the part of the most godly father can guarantee the salvation of his children.

- In my understanding, our text requires that we should look carefully at a man's relationship with his children.
- Does he attempt (to the best of his ideals) model godly behavior in the home?
- Is he conscientious to train his children in the ways of the Lord?
- Does he pray and point his family to the Bible?
- If so, normally most (if not all) of his children will likely come to believe in Christ.
- Even with that we must remember that we can give every effort and to the best of our ability live out the Christian life before our children, yet they are still responsible to accept or reject.
- If one goes astray, in my estimation it does not necessarily disqualify the man as an elder.
- Each situation must be prayerfully considered.

Whatever view you take, Paul's overall point is clear: an elder must be a godly husband and father. If his home life is not in order, don't expand his responsibilities over the family of God. A man who is not devoted to his wife and whose children are unruly and rebellious should not be put into church leadership.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER REFLECTS SPIRITUAL MATURITY IN THE PERSONAL CHARACTER AND SOUND DOCTRINE (1 Timothy 1:7-9)

"⁷For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, ⁸but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, ⁹holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict." -1 Timothy 1:7-9

Paul repeats the summary qualification for an bishop/overseer of being *"above reproach"* or *"blameless"* and then adds (1:7), *"as steward of God."* As I explained last week, elder and overseer are interchangeable terms (see 1:5). A steward was a household manager who was accountable to the owner for overseeing daily operations. The church is the household of God (1 Tim. 3:15). Thus elders or overseers manage it under God's authority and must give an account to Him (a sobering thought!). Also, as a steward, this isn't "my" church. It belongs to God, not to any man. He purchased with the blood of His own Son! Elders are just His stewards.

Paul goes on to list five negative character flaws that an elder must not have, and then six positive qualities that he must have.

5 Negative Character Flaws that Christians (Elders) Must Not Have:

(1) Christians (elders) must not be self-willed - The word literally means, "self-pleasing." It refers to a man who obstinately maintains his own opinion or asserts his own rights

and does not care about the rights, feelings, and interests of others (Trench, *Synonyms*, p. 349). The self-willed man often takes the contrary view because he loves to assert himself and wield power over others. He never admits that he was wrong. He is not a team player. If he acts in such self-willed ways in the church or with other elders, you can assume that he runs his family like a drill sergeant. Don't make him an elder!

- (2) **A Christian (elder) must not be quick-tempered** - A quick-tempered man is always a spark away from blowing up. He uses anger to intimidate or control others to get his own way. He is also usually a self-willed man. James 1:19-20 commands, *"But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God."* Patience, kindness, and self-control are fruits of the Spirit that should govern a spiritually mature man.
- (3) **A Christian (elder) must not be given to wine** – What does it mean to be “given” to something? It means you've given your self away to it. You can't live with out it... in other words addicted. When we “GIVE” our life to Jesus we mean we have given all of our self to Him in personal commitment. Here we are not to give ourselves to wine. “Wine” her means/includes all alcoholic beverages. The Bible does not prohibit drinking alcoholic beverages, but it does warn about the dangers of wine and strong drink, especially for leaders (Prov. 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-5). Drunkenness and addition to alcohol are always sinful (Eph. 5:18; Rom. 13:13; 1 Pet. 4:3; 1 Cor. 6:12). Church leaders must be especially careful so that they do not cause younger believers to stumble. If a younger believer, who formerly had a problem with drinking, sees me drinking, and my example causes him to fall back into his former ways, I am to some extent responsible. Thus if an elder chooses to drink at all, he must be careful and keep in mind his position as an example to the flock.
- (4) **A Christians (elder) must not be violent** – Here being “violent” means physically hitting others. But it may legitimately be expanded to refer to a man who is verbally combative, harsh, unkind to others in heated ways, abusive (verbally). It should be needless to say that an elder should never strike anyone, especially his wife or children. If he must spank his child, he exercises control and does not abuse the child. I think that it is always wrong to strike a child in the face or to spank when you're angry. The older the child, the more you use reason and the less you use spanking. The point is, an elder should not be a man who solves conflict by hitting others or being an aggressive bully.
- (5) **A Christian (elder) must not be greedy for money** - In 1 Timothy 3:3, Paul states that he *"must be free from the love of money."* Money itself is not evil, but it is dangerous. It is like a loaded gun—it can be very useful if it is properly and safely used for the right purposes, but it can hurt others or yourself if you use it carelessly. A greedy man is not qualified to be an elder, because greedy men are not godly. They will be tempted to take advantage of people financially or to misuse funds...even church funds. Again, each of these also relates to Christian character qualities too.

6 Positive Character Qualities That Christians (Elders) Must Have:

- (1) **A Christian (elder) must be hospitable** - The Greek word means, literally, “a lover of strangers.” Again, this is a quality that every Christian must strive for (Rom. 12:13; 1 Pet. 4:9), but it is especially incumbent on elders. If elders are not friendly and warm towards others, the entire church will reflect that indifference and selfishness. Hospitality means taking a genuine interest in others and making them feel welcomed and at ease. It should be begin here when the church gathers. If you’re talking with someone you know and see a visitor all alone, don’t keep talking to each other. Go to the visitor and make him feel welcome!
- (2) **A Christian (elder) must love what is good** - Negatively, he doesn’t fill his mind with all of the violent, sensual filth that is on TV or in movies... that streams today. Positively, as Paul puts it in **Philippians 4:8**, *“whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”*
- (3) **A Christian (elder) must be sober-minded** - For some reason, the NASB translates the same Greek word as prudent (in 1 Tim. 3:2). It means to be of sound mind, especially in the sense of not being impulsive. The sensible man is not swayed to extremes by his fluctuating emotions. He doesn’t give in to impulses that would be sinful or harmful. He is level-headed. He lives in light of his priorities and commitments.
- (4) **A Christian (elder) must be just** - This word sometimes means righteous, but in this context, it probably refers to a man who is fair and equitable in his dealings with others. He is not partial to the wealthy and he doesn’t ignore or belittle the poor. He is able to weigh the facts of a matter and make impartial decisions based on the evidence.
- (5) **A Christian (elder) must be holy** - This refers to practical holiness, being separate from sin and evil behavior. It does not mean being separate from sinners, because the Lord Jesus was the friend of sinners. But the devout man does not carouse with sinners in their sin. Rather, he seeks to lead them to repentance. The devout man takes God and the Word of God seriously. He doesn’t take the things of God as a joke. He lives in obedience to God’s Word.
- (6) **A Christian (elder) must be self-controlled** - Paul uses this word (1 Cor. 9:25) to refer to an athlete who exercises self-control in all things so that he may win the wreath. He doesn’t do anything that would hinder him from his goal. An elder must have control over harmful desires or habits that would interfere with knowing Christ more deeply or with being an effective shepherd of God’s flock. He will be disciplined about spending time alone with God in the Word and prayer. This word is the last of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23), which grow in us as we walk daily by means of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). (You may access my message from December 31, 2006, “Learning to Control Yourself,” which deals with this single topic.)

Maturity in Sound Doctrine - Verse 9 on maturity in sound doctrine. Now look at verse 9 of our passage, because Paul here give us one more key quality that is not only necessary for an elder, but for every believers/Christian. The character quality that Paul give her is sound doctrine, a thorough grounding in the Word of God... knowing what we believe and why we believe it. Listen to Paul in verse 9, *“⁹ holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”*

How Do You Live Out Christian Character in Sound Doctrine?

- (1) **Hold to the Word of God** – What does this mean do you think? It means you can just read the Bible, you can’t just go hear it preached and taught. That is not enough. You have to something with it. You have to apply it! You have to be able to internalize it and then live it out. We are to hold, unswervingly, to God’s Word. We need to be grounded in the Word and know what we believe and why we believe it. And we need to put it into practice it our daily lives.
- (2) **Exhort others with God’s Word** – “Exhort” means we are to urge, encourage, spur on, prod towards, others. How do we do this? First, by living it ourselves so that others may see it being lived out in our life and be courage to live it too. Second, but actually sharing with others what works, encouraging them with God’s Word, spurring them on towards living out their faith and putting it into practice.
- (3) **Convict with God’s Word** – This doesn’t mean we are to beat others over the head with the Bible, or use God’s Word at a whipping tool to put others in their place. It means, for one thing, that others ought to be convicted by the life we live according to the Word. This certainly happens when a believer lives it out. But it also means that we need to be grounded enough to recognize “false teaching” or poor mis-interpretations of God Word and point out the error, maybe even confronting it if necessary.

CONCLUSION

Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:5-7, *“⁵ But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶ to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷ to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.”* I want you to know not so much the character qualities Peter lists here, though they are important in their own right. Rather I want you to notice what he says about building or developing these character qualities.

3 Concluding Thoughts About Developing Christian Character:

- (1) **Be diligent in your pursuit of Christian character** – In other words, we are to give our selves fully, devotedly, doggedly toward the development of Christian character in our life in order that we might be the utmost for His highest.
- (2) **Be constantly adding to your repertoire (collection, catalog, range) of Christian character** – Remember that no one perfect lives up to the character qualities mention in Timothy, Titus, here in 2 Peter, or anywhere else in Scripture. We have work to do and

we need to continuously be developing these qualities, working on the character of our own life.

(3) ***All the character qualities we can develop in our life without love won't amount to anything*** – Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ²And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.*”