

**EXEGETICAL MATERIAL ON OVERSEERS, ELDERS,  
SHEPHERDS (PASTORS), AND DEACONS**  
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I. NEW TESTAMENT TERMS

There are four words in the New Testament which are used in describing those who serve in leadership in the church. Those words are overseer, elder, shepherd and deacon.

- A. Overseer (also translated Bishop) - (Greek - verb, episkopeo); (Greek - noun, episkope)
1. Verb = This word means to look upon, to inspect, to oversee, to look after, or to care for. The noun form derives its meaning from this word.
  2. Noun = The term refers to one who makes an inspection or investigation. It is used of God who looks into and searches out the actions and character of men in order to judge them accordingly. In such relationship to the church, it refers to the person whom God has placed in the church to provide direction and coordination of the ministries of the church.
    - a. 1 Timothy 3:1 = Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.
    - b. Peter 2:24-25 = He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.
    - c. 1 Peter 5:2 = Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve;
- B. Elder (Greek - presbuteros)
1. The term may be used in reference to age as in the elder of two people or when referring to one advanced in life, or one's forefathers
  2. It may also designate a rank or office and it was so used among the Jews for members of the great council or Sanhedrin. In the New Testament it is used when referring to men who presided over the local church.

3. It is also used of the twenty four members of the heavenly court seated on thrones around the throne of God.

C. Shepherd (also translated Pastor)

1. Verb (Greek - poimaino)

- a. This word means to feed, to tend a flock, or to keep sheep. The tasks of a shepherd included watching for enemies, defending the flock, healing any wounded or sick sheep, searching for and rescuing lost or trapped sheep and spending time with the flock so they would know him and follow him and so that he would earn their trust.

1. Acts 20:28 = Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds (lit. shepherd the church) of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.
2. 1 Peter 5:2 = Be shepherds (lit. shepherd the flock) of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve;

Note in these two occurrences that being an overseer means that one is to function as a shepherd.

- b. The word also carries the meaning of to rule, or to govern.

1. Revelation 7:17 = For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd (Lit. will shepherd them); he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

2. Noun (Greek - poimen)

- a. The noun refers to a herdsman and especially to one who cares for sheep.
- b. It is used outside the New Testament to designate the presiding officer, manager or director of any assembly.

c. Within the New Testament it refers to Christ and to those whom He has placed in authority over the church.

1. Hebrews 13:20 - May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep...
2. 1 Peter 2:25 - For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Here the terms shepherd and overseer are applied synonymously to Jesus.

3. 1 Peter 5:4 - And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.
4. Ephesians 4:11 - It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors (lit. shepherds) and teachers,

D. Deacon - Servant, deacon (Greek - diakonos) to serve (Greek - diakoneo)

1. This is the word from which we get the term deacon. It is not translated but rather is transliterated from Greek to English.
2. The noun form, diakonos occurs 28 times while the verb form, diakoneo occurs 32 times. The emphasis in both cases is to express personal help given to others.
3. It is also important to note that not every passage where the noun form appears refers to the office of a deacon. There are times when the word is used simply in reference to a person being a servant or rendering some type of service completely apart from what has become known as the official office of a deacon. Context of usage is vital to avoid misunderstanding. (See Matthew 23:11 in reference to the one who is greatest; Romans 13:3-4 of civil rulers; Romans 16:1 of a woman named Phoebe, 1 Corinthians 3:5 of Paul and Apollos)

There are more than twenty words in the New Testament which are translated by some form of the English word "serve, servant, or service."

These four major groups are the most critical for this study and the one which will be of greatest importance is the fourth one.

4. Slave, servant, bondservant, bondslave, (Greek - doulos); to serve, to be subject to, (Greek - douleuo)

Doulos is the most frequent word in the New Testament for slave or servant. It occurs 119 times and refers to one who is, by compulsion, in the service of another. It is used of the common slave who was the property of a slave owner. Because personal freedom was so highly prized in Greek and Roman culture a slave was looked down upon with revulsion and contempt. Although some slaves were granted personal liberties within their master's service their lives were generally filled with unrelenting, mandatory labor. (See Matthew 8:9, 24:45-47)

This word was also used by the Apostle Paul to describe his relationship to the Lord. Paul was the slave or bondservant and Jesus Christ was the Master or Lord. Paul understood that he had been "bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20) and therefore he was a slave. (See Romans 1:1).

5. To serve (Greek - latreuo), service or worship of God (Greek - latreia)

This word is found 21 times in the New Testament and in every instance the emphasis is on the religious sense of worship through serving God (or as in Romans 1:25 and Acts 7:42 serving a false god) (See Hebrews 12:28).

6. Servant (Greek - leitourgos), to serve (Greek - leitourgeo)

Appearing only five times in the New Testament this word emphasizes the voluntary service one would offer in the political community or in priestly service to God or to a false god. (See Hebrews 8:2 of Christ being a servant in the true sanctuary in heaven)

7. Servant, deacon (Greek - diakonos) to serve (Greek - diakoneo)

This is the word from which we get the term deacon. It is not translated but rather is transliterated from Greek to English. The noun form, diakonos occurs 28 times while the verb form, diakoneo occurs 32 times. The emphasis in both cases is to express personal help given to others. It is also important to note that not every passage where the noun form appears refers to the office of a deacon. There are many times when the word is used simply in reference to a person being a servant or rendering some type of service completely apart from what has become known as

the official office of a deacon. (See Matthew 23:11 in reference to the one who is greatest; Romans 13:3-4 of civil rulers; Romans 16:1 of a woman named Phoebe, 1 Corinthians 3:5 of Paul and Apollos)

Consider the word study material for a moment. Notice that the words *doulos* and *douleuo* are not used when referring to the office or work of a deacon. This is because the emphasis is not on the performance of this work as some form of slavery, or compulsory service. Notice also, that the words *latreuo*, *latreia*, *leitourgos* and *leitourgeo* are not used in reference to the office or work of a deacon. The work of a deacon is certainly an act of worship but it is not a religious activity which was commanded as a part of a worship system. In other words, it is not a liturgy. The words *diakonos* and *diakoneo* place the emphasis on voluntary, personal service rendered to another person for their benefit. The deacon is one who serves others because he wants to, not because he is forced to or because he is required to. This has profound implications for the quality and level of service which deacons will perform.

E. Observations on the use of these terms

1. The New Testament uses the term overseer, elder, and shepherd interchangeably in reference to leaders in the church.
  - a. 1 Peter 5:2 - ...shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;
  - b. Acts 20:28 - Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds (lit. shepherd the church) of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.
2. The New Testament presents a plurality of elders in serving in local churches.
  - a. Acts 20:17 - From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church.
  - b. Acts 21:18 - The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present.
  - c. 1 Timothy 5:17 - The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. (Note especially that it is the elders who

are entrusted with the preaching and teaching in the church. Note also that one might be recognized as an elder but not necessarily serve as a preacher or teacher.)

- d. Titus 1:5 - The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.
- e. 1 Peter 5:1 - To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow-elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed:

- 3. The distinction in usage between the four terms seems to reflect the particular emphasis of responsibility, not necessarily the creation of separate and distinct offices. Elders provide oversight to the general work and ministry of the church by performing works of service and by shepherding and teaching the flock.

## II. ASPIRATION TO OFFICE (1 Timothy 3:1)

- A. The aspiration for the office of overseer or bishop -1 Timothy 3:1

Not all men will desire to fulfill this office. It is not commanded that all believers become "overseers" but those who desire to do so are desiring a good thing. This is a picture of a man who actively seeks to fulfill the responsibilities of this position, not someone who would do it if asked but who has no particular desire or calling.

- B. The importance of the right motivation in seeking this office is underlined in the Scripture - 1 Peter 5:3

The overseer is not to use his office as a means to advance himself over others. He is to be an example of humility, service and sacrifice to the people God has placed in his care. One's true motivation eventually will be demonstrated through his actions. A man may be able to cover wicked intentions but not forever; they will eventually come to the surface.

- C. To aspire to leadership in the church is to aspire to the task of servanthood - Luke 22:24-27

In this portion of Scripture, Jesus clearly indicates that positions of importance do not absolve one of the responsibility of true service. The full context of this passage is found in John 13 where Jesus, during the course of the Passover meal, washed the feet of the disciples. By such an act he demonstrated the attitudes of

humility and service as well as symbolizing the need for daily cleansing from sin. Jesus states in Luke 22 that the one who is greatest is the one who serves. Such service finds its source in a person's heart who desires to be obedient to his Lord. Such service is pure in its motivation and is the hallmark of the kind of attitude which glorifies God and is necessary for those who are overseers.

### III. SCRIPTURE STUDY

- A. Acts 6:1-6 - In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

This is the passage which is considered by many to be the foundational passage for deacons. Some have objected to this since the noun diakonos does not appear in this passage nor does it in fact appear in the entire book of Acts. Those facts, however, do not necessarily mean that this event is not the foundation for what later came to be understood as a recognized ministry role within the church. The verb diakoneo does occur in this passage, and certainly the nature of this particular ministry and the qualifications of those entrusted with its implementation accord well with the nature of the ministry and qualifications for those aspiring to the office of overseer/deacon as later recorded in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

Notice the qualities of these men as outlined in this chapter.

1. Acts 6:3 - "...from among you, brothers..." Deacons come from those within the group of believers. They are to be well known by those whom they will serve.
2. Acts 6:3 - "...of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom." The NIV translates this phrase as "known to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom." There are actually three qualifications here which the NASB and KJV translate more clearly. These men are to be "testified to" or well known, that is, of good reputation. Their character is to be of the highest quality, especially since they are being called to care for those who are not able to adequately care for themselves. The potential for abuse and/or

neglect of their duties would be significant for those with less than a very high quality character. In addition, they are to be full of the Spirit and finally full of wisdom. These men must be sensitive to the direction of the Spirit, completely under His sovereign control in carrying out their responsibilities (Ephesians 5:18) and they must be dependent upon God for His wisdom and understanding (James 1:5-8)

The seven men chosen were Stephen, Philip, Proctors, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas. The last five are not mentioned anywhere else in the Scriptures. We might assume their ministry continued among the widows in Jerusalem until either persecution drove them from Jerusalem along with many of the other believers (Acts 8:1) or until the need no longer existed or until others took their place of ministry. Two of these seven, Stephen and Philip, had other notable outlets of ministry. Stephen remained in Jerusalem, fulfilling his responsibilities as a deacon while at the same time expanding his personal ministry into other areas. Philip eventually left Jerusalem and began an itinerant evangelistic ministry. Note especially the characteristics of these two men and their respective ministries.

Stephen - Acts 6:3, 5,8-7:60

- A Possessed a good reputation - 6:3
- A Full of the Spirit - 6:3, 5
- A Full of wisdom - 6:3
- A Full of faith - 6:5
- A Full of grace - 6:8
- A Full of power - 6:8
- A Did great wonders and miraculous signs - 6:8
- A Spoke powerfully against false teaching - 6:9-10
- A Was empowered by the Holy Spirit for his ministry - 6:10
- A Had a good understanding of the history of God working through His chosen people - 7:1-50
- A Was able to discern the spiritual condition of his hearers - 7:51-53
- A Had his heart and soul firmly fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ rather than on circumstances - 7:56, 59
- A Was willing to give his life in the service of Jesus Christ - 7:58
- A Displayed a forgiving spirit toward his murderers - 7:60

Philip - Acts 6:3; 8:5-40

- A Possessed a good reputation - 6:3
- A Full of the Spirit - 6:3
- A Full of wisdom - 6:3
- A Willing to preach to the Samaritans - 8:5
- A Performed sign miracles - 8:6-8
- A Sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit - 8:26, 29

- A Able to teach and explain the Scriptures - 8:30, 35
- A Faithful in his teaching ministry - 8:40

B. 1 Timothy 3:1-13 - Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

These qualities include:

Of an overseer: 1 Timothy 3:1-7

- above reproach - 2
- husband of one wife - 2
- temperate - 2
- self-controlled - 2
- respectable - 2
- hospitable - 2
- able to teach - 2
- not given to drunkenness - 3
- not violent - 3
- gentle - 3
- not quarrelsome - 3
- not a lover of money - 3
- good manager of his own house - 4-5
- not a recent convert - 6
- good reputation in the community - 7

Of a deacon: 1 Timothy 3:8-10;12

- worthy of respect - 8
- sincere - 8
- not indulging in much wine - 8
- not pursuing dishonest gain - 8

keeping hold of the deep truths of the faith - 9  
clear conscience - 9  
proven character and ability - 10  
husband of one wife - 12  
good manager of his own house - 12

Characteristics of the deacon's wife - 1 Timothy 3:11 - Because of the emphasis placed on the quality of the deacon's home and because of the nature of the deacon's ministry to people in the church there are some qualifications imposed upon the wife of the deacon as well.

worthy of respect  
not malicious talkers  
temperate  
trustworthy

- C. Titus 1:5-9 - The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless, not overbearing, not quick tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

Of an overseer

blameless - 6, 7  
husband of one wife - 6  
children who believe and behave - 6  
not overbearing - 7  
not quick-tempered  
not a drunkard - 7  
not violent - 7  
not pursuing dishonest gain - 7  
hospitable - 8  
one who loves what is good - 8  
self-controlled - 8  
upright - 8  
holy - 8  
disciplined - 8  
holding firmly to the gospel - 9  
able to encourage others - 9  
knowing sound doctrine - 9

#### IV. APPLICATION

In order to have a complete picture of the New Testament teaching concerning the qualities of an overseer the following material combines the lists of characteristics given in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and groups them into the areas of church testimony, public testimony, home life testimony, heart attitudes and personal relationships.

##### A. CHURCH TESTIMONY

###### 1. Above reproach

###### a. The concept behind the terms (1 Timothy 3:2,10 and Titus 1:6,7)

The concept behind this qualification is that the man has nothing in his life since coming to Christ which could be used by others to destroy the ministry. The word means 'not to be taken hold upon' or 'irreproachable.' This means a great deal more than simply not being a criminal. The overseer's conduct must be of such high quality that no opportunity is given to anyone to mar or injure his reputation. This does not mean that the overseer has attained sinless perfection. When a man presents himself for the responsibility of fulfilling the office of overseer he must have developed the kind of lifestyle and behavior which God's Word indicates is the standard for believers, i.e. the forsaking of sin and its practices and maturing in the faith. An overseer is not to have a life that is characterized by sinful behavior and attitudes. Such behavior renders one disqualified for ministry.

###### b. The key is to serve as an example for the flock (1 Peter 5:3)

Again we return to the principal of being an example. Overseers are charged with the responsibility of modeling a God-fearing, God-honoring lifestyle to the flock. That cannot be done unless the overseer has saturated his heart and life with God's Word so that his very manner of living points to the life changing truth of God's word and salvation.

###### c. This confirms his spiritual authority

Such a lifestyle gives added weight to the overseer's personal testimony and, in the case of a pastor gives added weight to the message preached. When the people see leaders in the local

church who truly live by the principles of the Word, their message is received, on the human level, as having real authority. Hypocrisy will destroy a man's ministry and is generally very easily seen by the members of the church as well as those outside the church.

2. Not a new convert but tested

- a. New converts are put into a vulnerable position when thrust too quickly into places of spiritual leadership (1 Timothy 3:6). There are avenues of service from the very first, but the responsibility of being an overseer is not among them.

It is important that overseers are men who have matured in the faith sufficiently that they will not be easily shaken when their faith is tested or when they face temptation. New believers are often unstable in their faith, simply because it is all so new. They need to become grounded and to mature in the application of biblical principles to their individual circumstances in life.

- b. The spiritual leader is not a neophyte because he has been tested in his faith and commitment (1 Timothy 3:10). Being tested does not mean some sort of formal examination or trial though there is merit in some type of formal examination to allow a man to demonstrate his knowledge of the Scriptures. The phrase does mean that the overseer must have been a Christian long enough to demonstrate to his fellow Christians that he meets the qualifications of verse eight. It is necessary that a man be involved in the local church to such an extent and for such a period of time that he proves the reality of his faith and Christian maturity in a variety of situations. This process takes time.

Positions of church leadership are never to be given as an incentive for someone with potential to live a more consistent Christian life. Such a philosophy will never result in a marginally spiritual man becoming more spiritual. In fact, it rewards a man for mediocre commitment which only leads to spiritual pride and self-satisfaction. In addition such a philosophy destroys the confidence of church members in the ability of such mediocre leaders to care for the work of the church.

B. PUBLIC TESTIMONY (1 Timothy 3:7)

1. The requirement of a good testimony to those outside of the church is part of God's selection process.

The great cry of unbelievers against professing Christians today is "hypocrite." Sadly, many times they are right. A believer who has not gained a good reputation among unbelievers is (1) not having any contact with them; in which case he is not obeying the Scriptural mandate to share one's faith, or (2) his words and lifestyle are opposed to one another. Those who desire to be an overseer of the flock must be demonstrating to the flock what it means to live a consistent, godly lifestyle.

2. The believer is no martyr when he suffers because of his own wrongdoing in the world (cf. 1 Peter 2:19-20 and 4:14-16).

When suffering comes as a result of our own sin and inconsistent lifestyle, we should not attempt to fool ourselves, and others, into thinking that it is for our righteousness that we are suffering. If the accusations of sin and inconsistency are true there is no ground for rejoicing. Such a situation must be met with humble repentance. Such suffering is probably God's early chastisement which, if ignored, will become more and more severe.

3. There is a two-fold danger to the practice of elevating to leadership those who are hypocrites in the world:

- a. Reproach - the accusation of those from the outside will reflect on all the members of the local church and on Jesus Christ Himself.

The damage done to the testimony of a local church when one of its leaders proves to be unworthy takes years to overcome. Sometimes the damage is of such proportions that it cannot be overcome until the next generation of believers assume the leadership. For this reason it is extremely important to place men in leadership who are well proven in their Christian life.

- b. Snare of the devil - Satan will set a snare (term used here is the one for a trap for game) to exploit the weaknesses of leaders. He will be sure that their sins are clearly exposed so that reproach will fall on the man, the church, the gospel. Satan knows the believer's weaknesses and will take any opportunity to capitalize on them. The overseer must, therefore, be aware of his own weaknesses and must guard against yielding to temptation and giving cause for reproach.

## C. HOME LIFE TESTIMONY

1. The husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6)

The same phrase is used in all three verses. (2x in reference to the elder, 1x in reference to deacons) Its literal translation is "a one woman man" and in each appearance it follows the quality of above reproach.

The emphasis is on the positive. Paul means that this man is characterized by loyalty to the marriage covenant that he entered into with his wife.

"It is stipulated that in this marital relationship he must be an example to others of faithfulness to his one and only marriage partner. Infidelity in this relationship is a sin against which the Scripture warns repeatedly." - Henderiksen

Being an overseer means that one is an example. This includes being faithful to one's wife and having the kind of unconditional marriage commitment which illustrates clearly Christ's love and commitment to His church. (Ephesians 5:21-33)

2. An effective father (1 Timothy 3:4, 12; Titus 1:6)

1 Timothy 3:4 - children in submission with all respectfulness

1 Timothy 3:12 - uses the word for manager found in vs. 4. This word speaks not only of authority in directing children but also the discretion, the care, the concern or dedication to the exercise of the position as head of the family.

Titus 1:6 adds two more comments about children:

"children who believe"

"not accused of rebellion"

3. The manager of the household (1 Timothy 3:5, 12)

Managers of household is broader term than just overseeing children - note distinction made in v.12.

The household refers to the house and what is in it, i.e. property or possessions. If a man is not careful about his own affairs, those things of which he should be vitally concerned, he will surely not be concerned about the affairs of others.

4. Having a qualified wife (1 Timothy 3:11)

Because the wife is such a vital part of the home and because God puts emphasis on the quality of the deacon's home his wife is to demonstrate certain characteristics as well. She is to be a woman who is worthy of respect. She must not be one who is caught up in malicious or destructive talk or gossip. She must be temperate, that is well balanced in her manner of living and she must be one who is trustworthy, especially since she will be privy to information which should not become known to others.

She will also be one who is called upon to minister to the younger women and to teach them, "to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands..." (Titus 2:3-5). These qualities must also be demonstrated in her life since one cannot teach and model qualities which one does not possess.

#### D. HEART ATTITUDES

1. Temperate, sober (1 Timothy 3:2, 11)

...temperate in the use of alcoholic beverage, clear-headed, sober, self-controlled. Using alcohol, and in this day "recreational" drugs, causes one to lose control by removing one's inhibitions and enabling one to participate in activities which he may not otherwise engage in. Such use always leads to abuse. Such a person is enslaved to the drug and cannot control himself. This is not what God wants in his children. We are to be examples of self-control which is enabled by our being Spirit-controlled. The use of alcohol and drugs gives control to something other than God.

2. Self-controlled (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)

...prudent, thoughtful, self-controlled. This is a picture of a man who is wise in his dealings and activities. He is not impulsive but uses wisdom in dealing with himself and others.

3. Respectable, orderly (1 Timothy 3:2)

...respectable, honorable. This is a man who conducts himself in such a way that it commands respect. He demonstrates his inner characteristics through the manner of life he lives. He is one who is worthy of honor.

4. Not addicted to wine (1 Timothy 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7)

...to apply oneself to or to be devoted to drink. Appearing here in the negative, this refers to a man who does not make alcohol a prominent part of his life. He does not abuse it by consuming it in such quantity that he becomes drunk (not able to control himself) nor does he make it such an important part of his life (e.g. with meals, dinner parties, etc.) that he cannot enjoy life without it.

Paul does not prohibit completely the use of wine in this or any other passage. This fact has surely been abused by many. In a culture in which alcohol and drunkenness are so closely associated with "the good life," wild parties, etc. it is a good testimony for the overseer refrain from using alcohol as a beverage.

5. Not a lover of money (1 Timothy 3:3, 8; Titus 1:8)

...not greedy, greedy for money. A man who has the idea that Christian service is a ticket to wealth and prosperity is operating under a false premise.

6. Loving good (Titus 1:7)

This is the only occurrence of this word in the New Testament and it is a compound of the verb "to love" and the word "good".

7. Just (Titus 1:8)

The idea is of one who does not break the law but does what is right.

8. Devout (Titus 1:8)

...pious, pleasing to God. He is a man who is pleasing to God in action as well as word. His devotion is not relegated to the closet but is demonstrated in every aspect of life.

9. Self-controlled (Titus 1:8)

...disciplined. This is quite similar to point two above.

10. Men of dignity (1 Tim.3:8, 11)

...worthy of respect or honor, noble, dignified, serious. Overseers are not frivolous in their thinking and behavior but are sensible, practical, and they conduct themselves, their personal affairs and the affairs of the church in a serious manner.

## E. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

### 1. Hospitable (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)

The root of this word means 'loving strangers.' The overseer must be such a person and especially willing to open his home and his table to fellow believers.

### 2. Skillful in doctrine (1 Timothy 3:2, 9; Titus 1:9)

An overseer must know the Word of God well. He must be able to explain the fundamental doctrines. He must be able to teach new believers more fully about God, salvation, etc. He should also be able to challenge mature believers with continued maturity in the faith. He takes his stand on what the Word of God teaches, either in principle or in individual cases and he conducts himself accordingly.

### 3. Not pugnacious (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)

...not a bully. This refers to much more than just the idea of physical violence. Naturally an overseer is not one who gets his own way by physically abusing people. Such behavior is not to be a part of the man of God. It is easy to miss some of the more subtle aspects of "bullying" people however. There are men who can intimidate others by their words or subtle actions and thus get their own way by sheer force of will. Not all bullying is done with fists.

### 4. Gentle, yielding (1 Timothy 3:3)

...kind, yielding, gentle. This is certainly the opposite quality of a bully.

An overseer is willing to work with people, meet their needs, teach the Word, hear their complaints, heed their wisdom. Such a man endeavors to keep the unity in the bond of peace. He is not "wishy-washy" nor is he a "push-over." He takes a firm stand for the Word of God and its principles etc. but he does it in such a way as to not drive individuals away.

### 5. Peaceable (1 Timothy 3:3)

The word is used here and also Titus 3:2. The root comes from a word which means to fight or quarrel or dispute but it is prefixed in the Greek with a negative. In other words, the overseers is a man who is not characterized by quarreling, disputing or fighting. He does not "get all

worked up" when he does not get his own way nor does he insist on his own rights.

6. Not self-willed (Titus 1:7)

The word is a compound word meaning "to enjoy, to take pleasure in one's self." This yields the meanings of self-pleasing, self-willed, and arrogant. The overseer is not a headstrong, stubborn man who demands his own way without regard for others.

7. Not quick-tempered (Titus 1:7)

...inclined to anger. This is the only appearance of this word in the New Testament. The overseer must not have a short fuse but rather have patience and understanding in his dealings with other imperfect men and women.

8. Not double-tongued (1 Timothy 3:8)

...insincere. The overseer should not make rash statements or promises but rather should exercise forethought and speak only what he means and intends to fulfill. He does not say one thing and mean another. He is as good as his word.

9. Not gossips (1 Timothy 3:11)

...slandorous. An overseer does not spread rumors, gossip, or any other type of injurious communication. Such action will destroy his effectiveness as an overseer as well as poison his own thoughts and attitudes toward others.

10. Faithful in all things (1 Timothy 3:11)

This seems to be a summary statement about the life qualities of an overseer. His entire lifestyle should demonstrate in a tangible way his faithfulness to the Word of God. His words, deeds and heart attitudes are all to be conformed to the standards set forth in Scripture.

## F. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

1. When recognizing elders/overseers/ shepherds (pastors)/deacons they must be men.

2. These men must possess particular characteristics. The recognition of such men must not be based on popularity, status, amount of financial support given to the local ministry, success in business, or any other such human criteria. Their recognition is based solely on their spiritual maturity as demonstrated by consistent, godly living in the home, church and community.
3. The elders/overseers/ shepherds (pastors)/deacons must serve because they have a desire to serve.
4. The wife of an elder/overseer/shepherd (pastor)/deacon must meet certain qualifications as a godly woman because, though the office is held by the man, his wife is an indispensable part of his ministry.

## V. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

At this point it would be easy to make a very serious, wrong conclusion. One might wrongly decide that the standards for elders/overseers/ shepherds (pastors)/deacons are so high that no one could possibly meet them. It is true that the standards are high. It is also true that some who "desire the office of an overseer" will not qualify, but God has not established an impossible set of criteria. Certainly no one, in their own human strength and will, will be able to live the kind of life required of overseers. But the encouraging part is that God enables the believer to do what he cannot do on his own. This is especially important for those who would serve as elders/overseers/ shepherds (pastors)/deacons to understand. This ministry can only be fulfilled through humility before God and one's fellow believers and through continual prayer for God's strength, wisdom, protection and guidance. Zechariah learned a very important lesson during the course of a series of visions given to him by the LORD after the Babylonian captivity had ended. Zechariah 4:6 indicates how God's great promise of restoration for the nation of Israel would come to pass. "'Not my might nor by power but by My Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty." That is precisely how any God-honoring ministry, is to be carried out. The success of such a ministry depends upon God enabling an imperfect but willing servant to do His will.