

I. Read II Timothy 2:1-2

- A. In verse 1 the Apostle Paul exhorts Timothy to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (NAS). Consider this exhortation in light of II Timothy 1:7-8 and comment on what Paul was getting at.

Paul continues to recognize Timothy’s tendency toward “timidity” and is encouraging him to grow beyond it in grace. He is especially clear that Timothy must learn to rely on the grace of God for strength and courage.

- B. The epistle of II Timothy is a pastoral letter from Paul to his younger protégé, Timothy. It is intended primarily as an encouragement and as instruction for a young preacher, though it is applicable to all subsequent generations of Christians and churches as well. In verse 2 Paul is instructing Timothy on the recruitment and training of future church leaders. The *Zondervan Study Bible* comments that the “things which you heard from me” (NAS) refers to “Paul’s preaching and teaching, which Timothy had heard repeatedly on all three missionary journeys.” The *New Geneva Study Bible* explains that the “faithful men who will be able to teach others” (NAS) would “presumably”...“be bishops or elders.” So Paul is calling Timothy’s attention to the principles and truths which he had already taught him regarding qualifications for officers in the church.

Read Titus 1:5-9, I Timothy 3:1-13, and Acts 6:3-4 and list the qualifications for officers given in each.

Titus 1:5-9

1. **above reproach**
2. **husband of one wife**
3. **believing children**
4. **not given to dissipation**
5. **not given to rebellion**
6. **not self-willed**
7. **not quick-tempered**
8. **not addicted to wine**
9. **not pugnacious**
10. **not fond of sordid gain**
11. **hospitable**
12. **loving what is good**
13. **sensible**
14. **just**
15. **devout**
16. **self-controlled**
17. **doctrinally grounded**
18. **able to exhort and refute error**

I Timothy 3:1-13

1. **above reproach**
2. **husband of one wife**
3. **temperate**
4. **prudent**
5. **respectable**
6. **hospitable**
7. **able to teach**
8. **not addicted to wine**
9. **not pugnacious**
10. **gentle**
11. **peaceable**
12. **free from love of money**
13. **manages family well**
14. **not a new convert**
15. **good reputation**

additional qualif. for deacons:

16. **dignified**
17. **not double-tongued**
18. **not addicted to wine**
19. **not greedy**
20. **doctrinally grounded**
21. **tested men**

Acts 6:3-4

(deacons particularly)

1. **men of good**
2. **full of the Spirit of God**
3. **wise men**
4. **able to take charge of specific tasks and successfully complete them**

Acts 6:3-4

(elders particularly)

1. **devoted to prayer**
2. **devoted to personal ministry in the word (teaching)**

- C. With the many qualifications for office listed above in mind, try to summarize and paraphrase, in as few words as possible, what men who serve as officers ought to look like.

Note to Leaders: Please read this answer after everyone in the class has had an opportunity to give their answer.

Officers should be spiritually and emotionally mature men who have been Christians long enough to have had time to grow beyond both the failures and the successes of their walk with Christ. They ought to be circumspect, empathetic, and doctrinally grounded so they can deal well with other people, especially in their own family and church. They should not have lived in a manner that damages the reputation of the church in the eyes of the world. They must be capable of putting the best interest of others (and especially of the church) before their own. They need to be disciplined men of self-control, especially in the use of alcohol and the use of money. They must have the spiritual gifts and desires that would enable them to demonstrate their calling as Elders and Deacons in the church. They must have an observable track record in this respect before accepting office, and the church should be able to confirm that they possess the required gifts for office. These are not perfect men, but they are gifted men of obvious commitment to Christ and devotion to the church and who love the Word of God.

Should doctrinal positions and opinions enter into consideration when considering who might be qualified for holding office in the church?

Absolutely. Recall that Paul instructed Timothy in II Timothy 2:2 to use his doctrinal teaching as a basis for preparing and selecting the leaders of the church. Men who are not in substantial doctrinal agreement with the particular church in which they will serve as an officer will have trouble being in one accord with their church in the exercise of their office.

Why is it so important that only men with the proper qualifications hold office in the church? Shouldn't anyone willing or desiring to serve be permitted to do so?

Holding office through ordination in the church is not a right; it is a calling from God. Only men who are truly called to serve as Elders and Deacons should do so. It is very important that only qualified men are ordained because of the great harm that can result from sinful patterns of behavior and mistakes made by the unqualified men. An ill-equipped officer can impede the success of the church. A wicked man holding office can destroy the unity and fellowship of a church. There is perhaps no greater responsibility (from God's perspective) than overseeing and serving Christ's church. The world may not recognize the importance of officers in the church, but God surely does.

Most of the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy, Titus, and Acts are self-explanatory and must be understood as being reflected *substantially* but *not perfectly* in the life and character of a man who would be ordained to office. However, some of the qualifications are debated within the church as to what precisely is meant. Consider the following qualification and discuss: What is meant by “husband of one wife?”

It means that a man is married to only one woman (consider that polygamy is and has been practiced around the world throughout history). It also means that a man has a demonstrated commitment to remaining married and does not have a pattern of multiple marriages in his past. It does not necessarily exclude a man who has been divorced if the divorce had biblical grounds or if it occurred before his conversion. Nor should it exclude a man who can give evidence that he understands the sinfulness of his divorce and that he has repented of that sin, including making any necessary efforts at reconciliation and/or restitution. (If he is remarried, he obviously should not leave his present wife to be reconciled to his ex-wife!) Some commentators explain that it means the prospective officer is a *one-woman man*, which implies a healthy, emotionally satisfying relationship with his wife and a strong, vital marriage.

What does it mean that a man not be “addicted to wine?”

Officers should not be drunkards. They ought to be given to conspicuous moderation and should always look to the best spiritual interest of those under their charge. This may mean that a man who would serve as an Elder or Deacon would choose to totally abstain, but the Scripture does not require this. The primary application of this qualification is the need for moderation and the willingness to give up a particular liberty (for example, drinking alcohol) for the sake of a weaker brother. A man unwilling or unable to do this, *if* he is so led by God, is “addicted to wine.”

What does it mean to be “able to exhort and refute error”? (Titus 1:9)

It means that a man has extensive biblical knowledge in general and a sound understanding of the fundamental principles of the faith. In our tradition it would mean that all officers must be clearly and consistently committed to the *reformed faith*. This means they are Calvinistic and covenantal and they have a biblical world-and-life view. This is especially important in our day because so much of the evangelical Church is Arminian, dispensational, and pietistic.

What does it mean that a man “not be a new convert?”

That might seem self-explanatory, but the difficulty lies in establishing a precise number of years that a man should be a Christian before being ordained as an officer. The Scripture says, “Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin” (1 Timothy 5:22, NAS). This admonition is made in the context of a discussion of elders, so we can understand it is as a warning against ordaining men to the office of elder or deacon too quickly. Some men mature spiritually more quickly than others because of their willingness to avail themselves consistently of *the means of grace* — bible study, prayer, the sacraments, accountability. Notwithstanding this, it takes many years to mature spiritually and emotionally to the point that a man is less likely to stumble into the sin of pride or perhaps do something that will hurt the church. A church should not allow itself to be too easily impressed by gifted newcomers or an eagerness to serve. Given enough time, it becomes evident what a man’s character truly is and where his heart is.

What does it mean to be “full of the Spirit” of God? (see Galatians 5:22-23)

To be Spirit-filled is to reflect, to some degree, the fruit of the Spirit in one's attitudes, behavior, and interaction with others.

How can a man know whether or not he is called to an office in the church?

A man being called to hold office in the church ought to be emotionally mature enough to be honest and objective about himself as he evaluates himself in light of the biblical qualifications. So the list of biblical qualifications is a primary criterion for any man considering office. Beyond that, there is a three-fold *evidence* of a call. It consists of (1) an inward desire or witness (2) an affirmation by other wise and prudent Christians that a man is both qualified and gifted for office and (3) a *call* or opportunity to serve in a particular church.