

# (Titus - Part 7): Qualifications for Church Leadership I

by A.W. Tozer

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of church leadership and the qualifications required for leaders, including blamelessness, monogamy, a decent home, self-control, and humility.*

**Duration:** 38:05

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, 1 Timothy 3:2-3, 1 Timothy 3:8, 1 Timothy 3:12, Titus 1:5, Titus 1:7

**Topics:** "Titus"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of the church being a separate and distinct entity from the world. He urges the church to not conform to the moral standards of the society they live in, but rather to be a shining example of meekness, gentleness, kindness, and generosity. The preacher shares a personal story of a backslidden Christian who missed an opportunity to share the gospel with a man seeking salvation because he was ashamed of his own ungodly appearance. The sermon also highlights the importance of church leaders maintaining a righteous and orderly household, as their behavior and the behavior of their children reflect on their leadership abilities.

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## Transcript

Now, if I should, for a little while, inadvertently speak with a slight accent, you will understand I spent last week among the Swedish Baptists in Bethel College in St. Paul. First meeting when, just before I preached, they presented me with a diploma, making me an honorary citizen of the state of Minnesota, signed by the governor, so I took the name of Tozequist while I was up there. Axel Tozequist was the name.

I suppose tomorrow night I'll have to be known as Dominique Garrett Vandertozeberg. But it's nice to get among the us foreigners to circulate that way a little. Incidentally, I bring greetings from the pharaohs.

One of the big, tall, good-looking ushers that used to roam up and down these isles. I suppose he's walked 900 miles up and down these isles as an usher. He's up there now, he and his wife, Effie.

And so homesick, it's terrible, really. Although they're in a good church up there. Also bring greetings from the Fardigs.

Ruth and Sheldon were there, also met Mr. Entner's brother, talked with him a number of times, and a few of the others. I received this week a letter from R.R. Brown. Dr. Brown had been at NIAC a week, and he tells me, and confirms what I had heard before, but tells me in some detail about the revival they had there.

He said he hadn't seen anything like it except on the foreign field. Hours it would run without anybody running it, just people meeting God. And he particularly mentioned two of our young people who had met the Lord in a most wonderful way.

One being, well, our own daughter, Becky, and the other being Case for Plew. He didn't mention the others, though undoubtedly they met the Lord and got help too. But these two, it seemed, particularly received specific spiritual help during those meetings.

We thought you'd want to know that. Now, in the book of Titus, we're hearing an apostle speak. This is not the language of good men who are good men who want us to help.

That's helpful too sometimes, but this is authoritative and inspiring. It's the language of an apostle. And he says to the man Titus, this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou should set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee.

That's verse 5. And on down to verse 9, we will try today to consider this, although there is subject matter here for 14 sermons, 15 sermons probably, if we would take the word blameless as God's steward. But we'll try to get it all in this morning. Now, he said, ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee.

And then he said, if any be blameless. Then in verse 7, he says, for a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God. Now, blamelessness here is not a virtue.

Blamelessness is a summation of the other virtues. See, he didn't say be blameless and be good and be hospitable and be clean. He said be blameless, and then here's what I mean by blameless.

That was Paul's method, and here we see it laid out before us. And he said, appoint elders, for a bishop must be blameless. We ought to talk just a little bit about this, I suppose.

If I wanted to follow the usual method of Bible teaching, I could shift you back and forth from one New Testament book to another, from 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and back again, and shift back and forth. But I don't intend to do it because the people to whom Paul wrote didn't have those other books. And Paul, I suppose, assumed that he had enough to say here in Titus that they wouldn't have to refer to the other books.

So I'm not going to refer to them, but try to stick close by this one book. And we have the word elder and the word bishop mentioned here. Now we are living hundreds of years from the beginning of the New Testament church, and much water has gone over the dam, and much wind has blown across the moor.

Many people have risen with strong opinions, and many strong dictatorial minds have impressed themselves upon the church during the centuries. And this bishop and elder and deacons deal has been more or less impressed upon the churches until you think that they get their ideas from the Bible. But actually, the New Testament is not very clear about all this.

It lays down the principles, but it leaves the outworking of them to the church. And the result is that we have very strong divisions within the church. Not really divisions so much as differing views.

For instance, the word bishop here is the word from which we get our episcopal ideas, the form of government known as the episcopal form of government, with bishops and archbishops, and the rule, a kind of autocratic rule from the top by bishops. And then the Presbyterian form of government comes from what is called the presbyter. That's where the word elder, And Paul uses both here, and he uses them synonymously.

That's a strange thing, that a bishop and an elder in the mind of Paul was the same person. An elder was the title, and a bishop outlined his duties. So that when you hear Paul say, I told you to ordain elders, for a bishop must be blameless.

He's not contradicting himself, and the translators weren't off. There were two different words there. One meant, or the word elder means simply what it means now, an older person.

And that was Jewish, or at least the idea came from the Jews. The older men were picked. Seventy of them.

They were the Sanhedrin. They were the leaders, older men. No young man got in there because he didn't have experience.

The older men. So the Church picked it up and used the word elder to mean an older person. There's no age set.

Some people are as old at 40 as others are at 90, and some never do get old, and some are never young. But the thought is simply that a little more time will give you opportunity to be a little wiser and a little broader minded, not quite so narrow, so that they picked elders. But that's describing the man as an older, honored brother, but his duty is summed up under the word bishop, and that was borne from the Roman form of government.

And it meant an inspector, an overseer, a ruler. Out in Zion, Illinois, they used the word overseer all the time. And there are certain other churches.

Certain churches will not use the word reverend. They use the word elder. Out there, they use the word overseer.

And so what I want you to see is that you ought to be too big to get caught in any of those hooks. As a Christian, you ought to be big enough to take in all the good that they can give you, but be bigger than all of it. If those who take the word bishop and then form an Episcopal form of government out of it, we won't condemn them, and we'll thank God for all of them, and you can hardly go through a service but what you sing a hymn by some Episcopal bishop.

So it's all right. Or if over on the other side there's the Presbyterian form of government, they're ruled by elders, why, you're not going to complain about that because you can hardly pick up a devotional book or sing a hymn but what you find a Presbyterian in it. Of course, the Methodists were Episcopal in their form of government, and for years were known as the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Now they're called simply the Methodist Church. Episcopal meant referred to their form of government. So that an elder and a bishop in the Scripture seemed to be about the same thing, and I wondered if I might not be extreme on this, but since I came to church this morning in my study, I checked it with the famous Smith Bible Dictionary, and they say the same thing, that you have two different words to mean about the same office.

It's an office of some authority, but it's not the final authority that the Episcopalians give it. Then there's the word deacon, but we'll not bring that up. Deacons were supposed to be young men, and we're not, so far as I know, dealing with it here.

The word deacon is not synonymous with bishop or elder. They were the ones who did the work around the church, that is, they served tables and all that sort of thing. You remember that when Ananias and Sapphira died, you remember who carried them out? The young men carried them out.

That's in the 5th chapter. Then in the 6th, those young men were ordained, laid their hands on them, and they became officially deacons in the church. But there are other offices.

There's that of apostle. Then there is the gift of the pastor and the gift of the different gifts that we've talked about here at great length in times gone by. Now, to be blameless, as God's steward, about whom are we speaking then? Well, we're speaking about anybody who holds an office in the church.

And if it's true of them, it certainly ought to be true of every one of God's children. God has no double standard. He does not say, now you saints are supposed to be very, very pure, and from the saints we draw our priesthood.

Well, God wants all of his people to be holy, and anything said here about an elder also should apply to the newest convert, or as soon as he can develop and grow in spirituality, at least the standards there for him. Now, blameless is God's steward. A man hasn't anything to give.

He's a dispenser of God's work. He's God's steward, and he's to be blameless. And I might say that it doesn't say faultless.

There's been no faultless person that ever lived. I think Adam was the only faultless man, and he couldn't have been faultless or he wouldn't have fallen. But faultlessness is not to be looked for, not to be looked for.

For instance, oh, who could we think of here for a moment? Take a man like Jonathan Edwards. A couple of articles about him in our magazine now. But take that man.

He wasn't a faultless man. He was a man who made mistakes. And though he was probably the greatest evangelist, second to Finney, that ever touched the American shores, he nevertheless made so many blunders that they actually threw him out of his church on one occasion, and he was in trouble.

He was not a perfect man, not a flawless man, but he was a blameless man in that he never did anything but what he did with a high, pure motive for the glory of God. And so God wants us not to be flawless but to be blameless. The Lord will overlook flaws in us if he finds consecration to the death and a willingness to serve him and be his steward blamelessly the best we can.

The Lord will overlook flaws. Well, now there are about 14 things that he said that an officer in the church, and I don't care what office it is you hold, if you are in any wise a leader within the church. This applies to you, and it also applies in its moral connotation to every true Christian.

First thing about this man that's mentioned was that he was to be the husband of one wife. That is, he was to be a monogamist, which means he was to have one wife and not have a cluster of them as they did in many parts of the world then and as they do in many parts of the world now. And Crete being the kind of place it was and being a melting pot for every sort of nationality, philosophy, religion, and race, I can understand how monogamy and the easy getting rid of one wife and taking up of another was common there.

It was accepted, and Paul said, now we're introducing a standard of morals infinitely higher than anything known in Crete. And while he didn't press it, he put it down as a rule. He said that if any be blameless, the ruler, the bishop, the elder must be blameless in this, that he is a monogamist, an auto-polygamist.

He is the husband of one wife. Somebody asked a Mormon missionary about this, and he said, well, he said, that means at least one wife. But what it says here is not at least one wife, but it says one wife.

That's it. The leader in church affairs, no matter what he does, if he's before the public and the public takes him as an example, he must understand that he owes it to God and to the faith and to the people that he is to be right in this particular. Then, two, he's to keep a decent house.

It says here, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. And I got a smile out of reading Wesley's translation of this. He says, having faithful children not accused of luxury or unruly.

Wesley was a great believer in a stern, lean way of serving God. He didn't believe in any excess fat, any excess anything. So he put, instead of the riot, he put the word luxury in there.

He thought it was close as he could get to the Greek, he thought. So what does it mean here? Some people have been so conscientious about this that if all their family wasn't converted, they wouldn't serve in the church. They've said, no, I wouldn't serve because my family's not all converted.

Well, now, I can't make that mean this. I can only make it to mean that the man who is given position in a church should not have a reputation of running a loose house with his children coming in at all hours, drinking and smoking and rioting. The Christian home should be a decent place to live.

And if you can't get them all born again, why, at least you can say to them, as I've said, said a hundred times to mine, our member, the rules of the home are such that if you're staying under the roof, you obey the rules. There are some things we don't do here. No dancing here, no smoking here, no drinking here, no bad language here.

This must be a decent home, a clean place. I believe that it's this that he has in mind that, for instance, an elder in a church who has lost complete control of his family. And his wife pushes him around like a carpet sweeper, and his family won't listen to him.

And he's pushed around, and they come in at all hours, and the place reeks with smoke and is accurate with drink. Even though the man may be a good man and weep long hours in prayer over this, he ought not, nevertheless, ought not to be in a place of leadership because people are likely to judge him by his house. And it says here that he's not to have a riotous house nor an unruly house, but that his children

should be faithful and not accused of riot or unruly.

What goes on in the hearts of his children he can't help, but he can help what goes on in his home. And the man who hasn't got enough gumption to see to it that his home is right hasn't got enough of what it takes to be a leader in the church. For it takes not only soft spirituality to be a leader in the church, it takes an ability, as I'm going to say tonight, to say no and yes.

I'd like to break into my sermon right here and say that tonight I'm going to talk and I'm going to address my message particularly to young people. Now, I want everybody to hear, but I'm going to give a talk particularly to young people from the Book of Proverbs, the voice of the Proverbs, the voice of eternal wisdom speaking through the Proverbs to youth. So come.

But anyway, now the third thing about this man is, in verse 7, he's not self-willed. That is, he's not a headstrong fellow who'll have his way if it busts up the whole church. There's no sense in that, absolutely none.

Yet there are those who consider themselves, I know a brother who, he considers himself right in everything, as I do, and I suppose you do, but he makes a point of it and he'll fight it. And even the tiniest little thing, if he said, I think the chair should be set at this angle, and a deacon said, no, I think it should be set at that angle, he'd make a church split out of that, he'd divide over that. He's going to tell every way, everything.

Well, that's being self-willed. We had a word on the firm. I don't know whether he used it in cities or not, but we called a man like that bullheaded.

Did you ever hear that? We said he was bullheaded. And the bullheaded man has no place in the pulpit. I suppose one of the most bullheaded men that ever lived is Martin Luther.

But he had to get over that. He had to come to a place where he said, oh, Luther died and the Lord lives within. And though it was normal for him to be strong and self-willed, he had to humble himself and learn to work with people.

My entire ministry has been a self-contradictory affair. It has been this, a temperament that wants to take orders from nobody and get along with nobody, and yet a scriptural conviction that I ought to. And so I do.

So that my whole life has consisted, my public ministry has consisted of walking on the face of a man named Tozer. My old English father used to, he was so, so self-willed and so independent that when he left the farm and came to the city and worked for a boss, he resented that boss telling him what to do. He resented it till he died.

Didn't want anybody pushing him around. Well, that's the way I feel by temperament, but the doctrine and the spirit and the teaching of the word tells me that I can't get away with that, that I have to get voted down sometimes, and that my opinions sometimes have to get slaughtered. I say on the New York board that if they want something killed, just let me make a speech in favor of it.

And, yeah, I and R.R. Brown, we are two fellas, all we have to do is get up and make a speech in favor of something, they'll vote her flat. Well, I have to learn the Lord does that, keep me humble. He does that, keep me down.

And so we're not to be self-willed, nobody. Self-willed Sunday school superintendent won't get along with his teachers. Self-willed teacher won't get along with his class.

Self-willed deacon won't get along with anybody. So not self-willed. Then in verse 7, another one, not having a bad temper, not soon angry.

I heard of, we had a preacher who came to us, incidentally, from the Salvation Army and became an Alliance preacher. And he was an eradicationist. That is, he believed that when you're sanctified that the root of evil went out and you were perfectly clean, as in before the fall.

And he sat on his board one night and some of the deacons brought up something he didn't agree with and they got into an argument and he lost his temper, got red-faced and hot and sassed back. And after that, oh, what am I going to do? He said, what am I going to do? He said, I've taught eradication and sanctified clean heart and here I got mad and lose my temper and blow up on my own board. I never knew what the brother did.

I was always too embarrassed to press it. Never found out. But I do know one thing, that you don't have to believe in eradication to get delivered from bad temper.

A bad temper, no excuse for a bad temper. None in the wide world. Let nobody say yes, but I'm Irish.

Doesn't make any difference. God can take the hottest red-headed Irishman that ever lived, calm him and cool him and bless him and fix him. Imagine Tom Hare getting mad and blowing up in your face.

Can't think of it, you know. You just can't imagine it. Because God's done something for him, but that red-headed fellow, which was red before it was gray, and I can imagine that before he was saved, if a pipe wrench slipped off the pipe, he could yell out an Irish oath like anybody else.

Because he had a temper, all Irish people do. But don't blame your being Irish. Don't blame your being Dutch or something else.

If you have a bad temper, consider it a blemish of character. Go to God and deal with it. Pray it through, weep it through, till God delivers you from it.

Now as dear old brother Van Dyke used to say, when the Lord filled him with the Holy Ghost, he didn't take away his temper, but he took the devil out of his temper. Said he didn't take the temper out of me, but he took the devil out of my temper. The temper in a saw my father used to boast about, he said that's a fine-tempered saw.

Meant by that that that was a finely-tempered piece of steel. It was the quality of it lay in its temper. And so a man with a high temper, he isn't to have that pulled out and promptly be meek and spineless.

But he's to have it purified and consecrated, so what used to be a temper that would make him blow up, now is an inward strength of character that makes him love righteousness and hate iniquity. He's stronger for that thing, but when the devil is in it, he's just simply got an evil temper. And an evil temper always is bad, and there's no excuse for it.

And if you've got one, you have no excuse for it under God. Nobody has any right to let himself get elected to anything in any church if he's got a bad temper. And then he says in verse 7, he's not addicted to alcohol.

Verse 7. Not given to wine. Given to wine is just a way of saying it, I suppose. He's not given to alcohol.

I don't think I need to press that here. I never preach against liquor. You've never heard me preach a sermon against liquor, but nobody around here drinks.

I hope. If they do, they don't stay around here. There are some places where the climate just isn't favorable to certain kinds of life.

Just not favorable. You can't raise oranges up down in Little America. And a drinking man couldn't stay around here and disguise his drinking.

All the sin, sin he can chew, he still wouldn't feel good around here. His own heart would take him out of here and somewhere else for long. Well, in there's 6. Verse 7, no striker.

This is almost funny, but you have to remember who he was writing to. He was writing to the Cretans. And evidently the way some people got their way in Crete was to use their fists.

That's actually what it means. Now, it has no reference whatsoever to striking, like when the international harvester or employees strike. That's another meaning of the word.

What it means here is using your fists to strike a blow. Well, it's almost humorous, isn't it, to think of an old deacon trying to get somebody else to do what he's told and he wouldn't do it and he just cuffs him to get him to obey. That seems to me that would be just a little bit extreme.

Yet they tell me they tend to want to do that on the foreign field. Some of those heathen just converted and they get into some little position in the church and they get their way by using their fists. They have to learn that's no way to do it.

No way to do it at all. Thank God you don't have to cuff people around to get obedience. The church has found other ways to get obedience.

Purgatory is one of them. They say, I won't pray your grandmother out of hell if you don't be good. But it's about the same thing.

I don't know which should be the worst, which morally before God would be the most preposterous for me to say to McAfee, now McAfee, go make that call or I'll black your eye. Or to say, go make that call or I'll not pray your mother out of purgatory. It's the same.

It's using force. It's a different kind of force, but it's force. It says, don't be any striker.

Don't be any striker. Well, and it says he's not to be a lover of money, not given to filthy lucre. I can hear Paul, when he uses that word, kind of throwing it off his tongue.

He never had any money. And now money is one thing and filthy money is another thing. Lucre, of course, means gain and filthy lucre means gain that's gotten filthily or that is loved unduly and therefore becomes filthy.

You can earn a dollar or \$10 honestly and then get a moral attitude toward it that makes it filthy. So money is filthy only when you have made it filthy by your attitude toward it. But on the other hand, Paul writes elsewhere what to do with money.

He said on the first day of the week, let everybody bring his money in and lay it up and give it to God and have to give to those that are in need. And Jesus, our Lord, said, have we got any tax money? And Peter said, no. He said, go down and fish.

And he went down and fished and got a fish with money in its mouth. There was no miracle about the fish having money in its mouth. The miracle was that Peter got that particular fish.

For fish are known to grab anything shiny, you know. That's how fishermen catch them. They throw down in a shiny spoon, they grab it and get a hook.

But this one had grabbed somebody had accidentally bent over, you know, to clean a boat or something and out of his little pouch had gone a denarius, a little shiny affair. And the fish got it in his mouth and it stuck and Peter got that very fish. That was the miracle.

Well, money's all right. And the Lord used it and said, pay our tax for all of us. But it's filthy money.

A lover of filthy money. And you know, here's the odd thing. The less money you have, the less likely you are to love money.

And the more money you have, the more likely you are to love money. So that filthy lucre becomes filthy when it begins to pile up. Now watch it.

And then hospitable. I don't think I'll ever get through this this morning. I'll never get through this this morning to do it any justice at all.

So let's break it off there and talk about something else later. I want to talk about hospitality and keeping company with a good man and being sober and just and holy and temperate and orthodox. And that's too much.

I won't keep you here. Keep you till 1230. You don't want to stay till 1230.

So now let's ask God. Let's pray. When you want to pray for a preacher, don't necessarily pray, Lord, give him success.

Pray that the Lord will help him to be the kind of man that he ought to be. You want to pray for the church. Pray that its leadership might be this kind of leadership and then that kind of spirit may be found everywhere among all of God's people.

Delivered from lust and from noisy houses where the neighbors don't think well of us and from stubborn bullheadedness that tends to split churches and cause trouble and alcohol or any other kind of habits and the habit of using your fist to get your way. No way to do. And certainly not to be a lover of money.

Well, there'll be some more. There'll be eight more of these and some more things I want to talk about next Sunday morning. But that's the way a church should be.

A church should be an example to all the neighborhood roundabout. A church never ought to take on the complexion of the neighborhood. Never.

Never should take on the complexion of the people among whom they are. Never should take on the moral complexion of the age in which it lives. The church is as separated from the age in which it lives

morally as Jesus Christ was separated from Rome.

The church should be a separated people and all of us should be this kind of meek and gentle and quiet and kindly and generous people so that the world around about us should know what kind of people we are and the very darkness should make the star of our church shine that much the brighter. We should have that kind of a church from the newest convert to the oldest most honored elder. We should have that kind of a church.

Nobody should live a life that anybody can point to and say now I don't like the kind of life you're living. I'll tell you this in close. A man told me last night at a meeting where I preach about a friend that he'd led to the Lord who later backslid for a short time.

He came back wonderfully and lived his wonderful life and went to heaven but he had a period of backsliding and while he was in that period of backsliding he became a tramp and was thumbing his way by the roadside, a disheveled, unkempt bum of a fellow and he was thumbing his way and a man stopped and he said want to get in? He got in there, rode along. He asked him, asked the driver where are you headed for? Well sir, he said I'll tell you boy where I'm headed for. He said I'm on my way to hunt a man who can tell me how to be saved.

He said I want to be saved. I want to be converted and I don't know how and I'm on my way to see a fellow I think he can tell me. And this backslidden brother sat there and he said I felt like a dog.

I didn't dare open my mouth. He said I knew what to tell him. I knew the verses.

I knew the way but I never opened my mouth. He said I sat there in shamed silence. I was a bum and he said here was a man hunting God and I knew how to tell him to get to God but I didn't dare spoil it by saying here I got converted.

He said what would he have thought? You know what would have happened? That man would have turned his back on Christianity nine chances out of ten to hear a man say I'm a Christian and then look at me an unshaven bum and yet I'm a Christian. No. But if that young man had been a real Christian a real Christian had just been thumbing his way to school or off somewhere young fellas sometimes do happy face and clean he could have told that driver you don't have to go any further.

I can tell you how to meet God. I can tell you. You don't have to drive another foot.

I can tell you right here. But he was wise enough even though temporarily in a state of backsliding he was wise enough not to tip his hand and let this other man know that he had been a Christian. And if you've got to always be covering up your Christianity for the way you live what you need is a revival and you need it quick and you need it bad.

We ought to live such perfectly clean open lives everywhere we go on buses, trains, at work, everywhere so that when we get into a religious conversation we won't be afraid to shame our testimony by the way we live. Amen.

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