
Bible Study

Titus 1:5–9

Qualified Leadership for God's Household

Rev. James Taylor

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Context and Purpose

Titus inherited unfinished work.

- Paul left Titus in Crete to complete unfinished work — an active, ongoing apostolic commission.
- The churches were young and needed greater organization — structure and recognized leadership were still being established.

“...so that you might put what remained into order...”

Titus 1:5

Why Qualified Leaders Were Urgent

False teaching required qualified leaders.

- False teachers threatened the stability and doctrine of the churches, requiring urgent response.
- Qualified leaders were necessary to strengthen the churches, preserve apostolic teaching, and protect congregations from error.
- Paul emphasizes both moral character and doctrinal competence as inseparable leadership essentials.

Why These Qualifications Matter

Culture and crisis explain Paul's emphasis.

Leadership qualifications were not merely administrative — they were essential to the health and protection of the church.

The qualifications make even more sense when viewed against the cultural background of Crete.

The Cretan Setting

Qualifications answered moral disorder.

- Crete had an ancient reputation for dishonesty, self-indulgence, greed, and moral disorder — well documented in Greco-Roman literature.

“Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.”

Titus 1:12

Paul cites this Cretan description directly, quoting the Cretan poet Epimenides.

Leaders Were Called to Be a Counter-Witness

Leaders had to model another way.

- Against this background, Paul repeatedly requires leaders to be above reproach — the standard set in direct contrast to the culture around them.
- Elders were expected to model a life visibly different from the surrounding culture — their conduct serving as a living alternative witness.
- Their character affected both the church's internal health and its public witness — integrity within and credibility without.

Titus's Commission — Step One

Correct the unfinished work.

EPIDIORTHOŌ

“to set right” or “to put in order”

- A hapax legomenon — it occurs only once in the entire New Testament, lending particular weight to Paul's deliberate word choice.
- Paul's mandate was not merely to establish new structures, but to correct and complete what had been left undone — implying existing but incomplete organization.

Titus's Commission — Step Two

Appoint elders in every town.

KATA POLEIS

“town by town” or “in every city”

- Qualified leadership was not optional for any congregation.
- Scope was island-wide — leadership was needed throughout all the Cretan churches, not only in a central location.
- Titus bore personal responsibility for ensuring appointments were made; the text does not specify whether he acted alone or with congregational involvement.

The Elder as God's Steward

The church belongs to God.

theou oikonomon

“God's Steward”

An oikonomos was a household manager entrusted with another person's property, finances, provisions, and household affairs.

The elder manages something that belongs to someone else.

Faithful Stewardship Is a Posture

Trust reshapes authority.

ENTRUSTED
not possessed

SERVICE
not self-interest

ACCOUNTABLE
not autonomous

TRUST
The church belongs to God,
not the leader.

The Controlling Qualification

Above reproach governs every requirement.

anegklētos

**Above reproach — blameless before the
watching community.**

This is not sinless perfection, but a life that presents no sustainable charge against the elder's character or conduct.

*anegklētos appears twice in vv. 6–7, functioning as the
umbrella qualification under which all others are gathered.*

The Household Is Character Evidence

Private fidelity makes character visible.

A “one-woman man”

Wholly devoted in marital fidelity.

Children not characterized by reckless living or rebellion

Their conduct reflects the order of his home.

The family is not background information; it is observable evidence of character.

From One Household to God's Household

The home is the qualifying arena.

- Leadership of one's own household demonstrates readiness for leadership within God's household.
- The elder's private character cannot be separated from his public ministry.
- Family life provides an observable, verifiable test of character.

HOUSEHOLD → GOD'S HOUSEHOLD

Elder — presbyteros

Verse 5 emphasizes the person and office.

VERSE 5

presbyteros

Elder

Identifies the person or office itself — drawing on the concept of honored, mature leadership recognized within the community of faith.

Emphasizes who the person is — their standing and character within the church.

Overseer — episkopos

Verse 7 emphasizes the function of oversight.

VERSE 7

episkopos

Overseer

Emphasizes the function of oversight — the active watching over, guiding, and guarding of God's household and its members.

**Emphasizes what the person does — their active role
of watching over the flock.**

How Should the Two Terms Be Understood?

The relationship is close, but not fully resolved.

- Common interpretation: both terms denote the same leadership office viewed from different perspectives.
- Alternative view: house-church overseers may have collectively functioned as elders across the broader network.
- Scholarly debate: some see different functions or developing organizational structures within early churches.

Titus 1:5–9 closely relates the terms but does not fully resolve the organizational structure.

Negative Qualifications — Part 1

The overseer must not be controlled by self.

Not Self-Willed (authades)

Not controlled by personal desires or insistence on his own way; not arrogantly self-pleasing.

Not Quick-Tempered (orgilos)

Not characterized by uncontrolled anger; not prone to outbursts of wrath or irritability.

Not Addicted to Wine (paroinos)

Not controlled by excessive drinking; not one who lingers beside wine or is given to intoxication.

Negative Qualifications — Part 2

Violence and greed contradict stewardship.

Not Violent (plektes)

Not aggressive or combative; not a striker or one who resorts to physical intimidation.

Not Greedy for Dishonest Gain (aischrokerdes)

Does not exploit ministry for personal profit; not shamefully motivated by financial advantage.

These behaviors represent uncontrolled and self-centered living and are incompatible with faithful stewardship of God's household.

The Turn from Vice to Virtue

Titus 1:8 names six qualities to cultivate.

ἀλλὰ φιλόξενον
φιλάγαθον · σώφρονα
δίκαιον · ὅσιον · ἐγκρατῆ

*Paul moves from vices to avoid to virtues to cultivate —
together forming a complete portrait of the faithful
overseer.*

Positive Qualifications — Part 1

Virtue begins with an outward life.

philoxenos — HOSPITABLE

Lover of strangers; oriented outward toward others rather than inward toward self.

philagathos — LOVING WHAT IS GOOD

Possesses a deep affection for goodness itself; a settled disposition toward moral excellence.

sophron — SENSIBLE

Sound judgment, prudence, and restraint; a mind governed by wisdom rather than impulse.

Positive Qualifications — Part 2

Justice, devotion, and self-control sustain leadership.

dikaios — JUST

Acts rightly and treats others fairly; aligned with God's standard of righteousness in conduct.

hosios — DEVOUT

Reverent toward God; a piety that reflects proper orientation to the divine — not merely outward religion.

enkrates — SELF-CONTROLLED

Exercises mastery over impulses and appetites; the inner governance that makes all other virtues sustainable.

Paul Moves from Vices to Virtues

Verses 7–8 form a complete portrait.

“...not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not violent...”

Titus 1:7

Each vice reveals a leader controlled by self rather than the Spirit.

Self-centered leadership versus God-centered stewardship — the overseer is not controlled by anger, appetite, aggression, greed, or personal desire.

The Contrast in Character — Vices

Five forms of self-centered control.

Self-Willed

CONTROLLED BY PERSONAL DESIRE

Quick-Tempered

UNCONTROLLED ANGER

Addicted to Wine

ENSLAVED BY APPETITE

Violent

AGGRESSIVE AND COMBATIVE

Greedy

EXPLOITS MINISTRY FOR GAIN

The Contrast in Character — Virtues

Verse 8 describes God-centered stewardship.

Hospitable

ORIENTED TOWARD OTHERS

Sensible

SOUND JUDGMENT & PRUDENCE

Self-Controlled

MASTERS IMPULSES & APPETITES

Just & Devout

RIGHTEOUS TOWARD GOD AND OTHERS

Loving What Is Good

AFFECTION FOR GOODNESS ITSELF

**Self-centered leadership versus God-centered
stewardship**

Doctrinal Fidelity

Character culminates in doctrinal fidelity.

- The final qualification moves explicitly from character to doctrine — completing Paul's portrait of the qualified overseer.
- The overseer must continually hold firmly to trustworthy Christian teaching — a present, ongoing action.
- His message is not self-created or personally determined — it is governed by the teaching entrusted to the church.

Sound doctrine enables two distinct pastoral responsibilities.

Sound Doctrine Has Two Responsibilities

Pastoral teaching constructs and corrects.

parakalein

Exhort & encourage

Build up the faithful
through sound teaching.

elenchein

Refute & reprove

Defend against those who
contradict sound teaching.

**Both responsibilities depend on holding fast to the
apostolic deposit.**

Character and Doctrine Belong Together

Either deficit leaves the church exposed.

NO CHARACTER

Lacks Credibility

Little standing when confronting corrupt teachers — his life does not commend his message.

CHARACTER DEFICIT

NO DOCTRINE

Lacks Discernment

Cannot identify or answer false teaching — disarmed before the very error he must oppose.

DOCTRINAL DEFICIT

Character + Doctrine = Faithful Stewardship

Credibility and competence form one standard.

Faithful Stewardship

The overseer embodies the gospel he teaches and possesses the doctrinal competence to preserve it.

- Paul's requirements respond directly to the threat of false teachers in Titus 1:10–16 — the qualifications are not theoretical but arise from a concrete pastoral crisis.

Character lends credibility and doctrine provides competence; neither alone is sufficient.

Pastoral Significance — Character

The leader embodies the gospel.

01 · CHARACTER

**His life is not merely a platform for his words
— it is itself a witness.**

**Moral integrity makes his ministry credible and
consistent.**

Pastoral Significance — Stewardship

The leader cares for something belonging to God.

02 · STEWARDSHIP

**As theou oikonomon, he manages what is
entrusted — not possessed.**

**Authority serves accountability; leadership serves
God's household.**

Pastoral Significance — Doctrine

Doctrine must be preserved and defended.

03 · DOCTRINAL FIDELITY

**The leader preserves, teaches, and defends
Christian truth.**

Sound teaching is not optional. He must both exhort through truth and refute those who contradict it — building up and guarding the church.

**Faithful doctrine builds up the church and protects it
from error.**

Implications for Ministry

Faithful leadership requires both life and teaching.

- Leadership is fundamentally entrusted rather than possessed.
- A leader who teaches truth but lives contrary to it misrepresents God.
- A morally respectable leader who cannot preserve sound teaching also fails in his stewardship.

CHARACTER + DOCTRINE = FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP

Selected Bibliography — Part 1

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Primary Sources & Lexical Tools

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Additional Secondary Sources

Additional primary and secondary sources as cited in exegetical notes throughout this presentation.

Full bibliographic details and in-text citations are available in the accompanying exegetical paper.