
Bible Study

Titus 1:5–9

Qualified Leadership for God's Household

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Context and Purpose

TITUS 1:5-9 · EXEGETICAL STUDY



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.



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.



Titus 1:5

*"...so that you might
put what remained
into order..."*

CHARACTER

DOCTRINE

KEY IDEA

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

🌐 The Cretan Setting

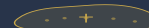
🏠 Crete had an ancient reputation for **dishonesty, self-indulgence, greed,** and **moral disorder** — well documented in Greco-Roman literature.

📄 Paul cites the Cretan description directly — *"liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons"* (Titus 1:12) — quoting the Cretan poet Epimenides.

🛡️ 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.



CRETE

Mediterranean Island · First
Century Context

”

*"Cretans are always liars,
evil brutes, lazy gluttons."*

— Titus 1:12

CULTURAL CONTEXT

Presentation emphasis: *The qualifications make even more sense when viewed against the cultural background of Crete.*

Titus's Commission

Titus 1:5

STEP ONE

1

Complete & Correct the Unfinished Work

The Greek verb *epidiorthōō* means "to set right" or "to put in order."



A hapax legomenon — 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.



THEN

STEP TWO

2

Appoint Elders in Every Town

The phrase *kata poleis* — "town by town" or "in every city" — signals that 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 text places responsibility upon Titus for ensuring that qualified leaders were appointed, although the exact selection process is not explained.

theou oikonomon

"God's Steward"

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

ENTRUSTED

not possessed

ACCOUNTABLE

not autonomous

SERVICE

not self-interest

The elder manages something that belongs to someone else. Central principle: **TRUST**. The church belongs to **God**, not the leader.

The Controlling Qualification



anegklētos THE CONTROLLING QUALIFICATION

1

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.



In the Household FAMILY AS CHARACTER EVIDENCE

2

A "**one-woman man**" — wholly devoted in marital fidelity. Children not characterized by **reckless living or rebellion**, reflecting the order of his home.



The Logic HOUSEHOLD → GOD'S HOUSEHOLD

3

Leadership of **one's own household** demonstrates readiness for leadership within **God's household**. The home is the qualifying arena.



Key Idea PRIVATE & PUBLIC INSEPARABLE

4

The elder's **private character cannot be separated** from his public ministry. Family life provides an **observable, verifiable test** of character.

Elder and Overseer

 TITUS 1:5–9

VERSE 5

presbyteros

Elder

FUNCTION

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

→
SAME
OFFICE
DIFFERENT
PERSPECTIVES
→

VERSE 7

episkopos

Overseer

FUNCTION

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

- **Common interpretation:** both terms denote the same leadership office viewed from different perspectives.
- **Scholarly debate:** some see different functions or developing organizational structures within early churches.
- **Alternative view:** house-church overseers may have collectively functioned as elders across the broader network.
- **Conclusion:** Titus 1:5–9 shows a close relationship between the terms without fully resolving the organizational structure.

Negative Qualifications — Verse 7



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



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



DISQUALIFYING VICES

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

"...not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not violent..."
Titus 1:7



FIVE PROHIBITIONS



CONNECTING THEME

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

Positive Qualifications

TITUS 1:8

Six virtues the overseer must embody

ἀλλὰ φιλόξενον
φιλάγαθον · σώφρονα
δίκαιον · ὁσίον ·
ἐγκρατῆ



1

philoxenos
HOSPITABLE

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



2

philagathos
LOVING WHAT IS GOOD

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



3

sophron
SENSIBLE

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



4

dikaios
JUST

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



5

hosios
DEVOUT

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



6

enkrates
SELF-CONTROLLED

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

→ **NOTE** Paul moves deliberately from *vices to avoid* (v.7) to *virtues to cultivate* (v.8) — together forming a complete portrait of the faithful overseer.

The Contrast in Character

Verse 7 vs. Verse 8 — Vices to Avoid & Virtues to Cultivate

⚠️ VICES TO AVOID

Verse 7

🕒 **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

VS

🛡️ VIRTUES TO CULTIVATE

Verse 8

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

CENTRAL CONTRAST

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

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 — see panel →

TWO RESPONSIBILITIES OF SOUND DOCTRINE



parakalein

Exhort & encourage through sound teaching



elenchein

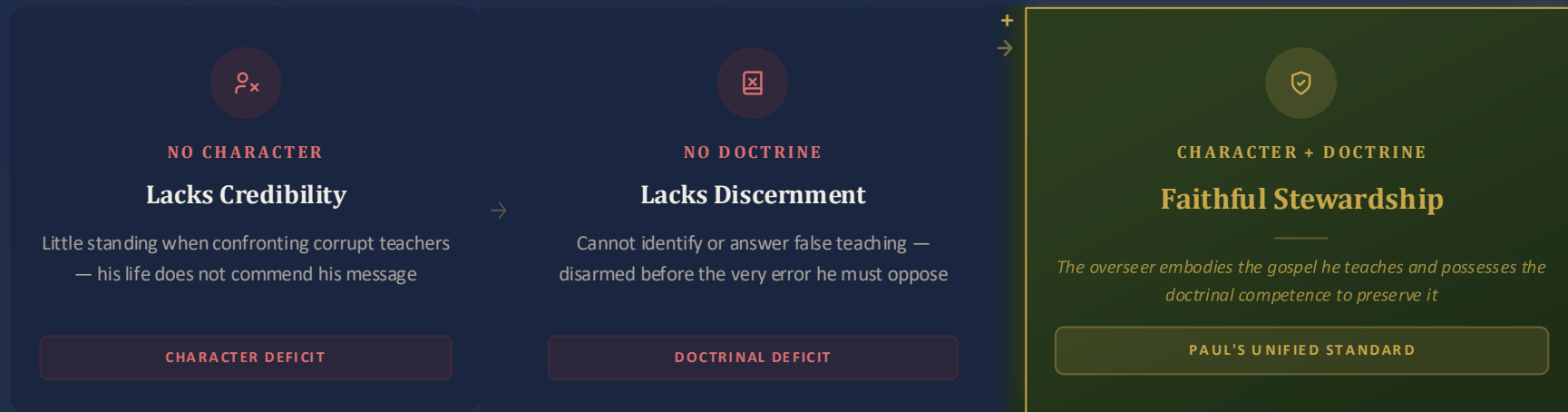
Refute & reprove those who contradict sound teaching

KEY IDEA

*Pastoral teaching is both **constructive** and **corrective**.*

The overseer builds up the faithful and defends against error — both depend on holding fast to the apostolic deposit.

Why Character and Doctrine Belong Together



- 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.
- The two cannot be separated in Paul's portrait of Christian leadership — **character lends credibility** and **doctrine provides competence**; neither alone is sufficient.

Theological and Pastoral Significance



01 CHARACTER

The leader embodies the gospel.

His life is not merely a platform for his words — it is itself a witness. Moral integrity makes his ministry credible and consistent.



02 STEWARDSHIP

The leader cares for something belonging to God.

As *theou oikonomon*, he manages what is entrusted — not possessed. Authority serves accountability; leadership serves God's household.



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.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MINISTRY

- 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.

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Titus 1:5–9

CHARACTER

+ Doctrine



FAITHFUL

Stewardship

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Nida semantic domains.

Additional Secondary Sources

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

