

The Scrolls

Helping CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V27 N44 November 2, 2025

LIVING THE BEAUTIFUL GOSPEL

"Leaders Who Make the Truth Visible" Titus 1:5-9

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Church

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish his purposes on earth today.

"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

Ephesians 4:15-16





What kind of person can be an elder?



Titus is mentioned by name 13 times in Paul's letters all in connection with the apostle's ministry. In his letter to Titus, Paul mentions that he left Titus in Crete to "put in order the things that still needed doing and appoint church elders in every town" (GNT). It seems Paul and Titus had been engaged in ministry together on Crete (Titus 1:5)—a ministry not mentioned in the book of Acts, which likely followed Paul's release from his first Roman imprisonment ca. A.D. 66. Apparently, appointing elders to oversee the churches on the fourth largest island in the Mediterranean Sea was one of the things that still needed doing.

The qualifications needed to serve as an "elder," Gk. *presbuteros*, (v. 6) or an "overseer," Gk. *episkopos*, (v. 7)—cf. "bishop" (NKJV)—raises questions regarding church leaders (*deacons* are not mentioned in Titus). For example, do the two terms refer to two different leadership positions in the church with two different sets of responsibilities, or to the same leadership position and the same set of responsibilities? And what about the term "pastor," Gk. *poimēn* (Eph 4:11)?

Regarding the *first* question, it appears that the two terms "elder" and "overseer" refer to the same leadership position with the same set of responsibilities—"overseers" or "bishops" have no more authority than "elders." Paul commissioned Titus to appoint elders in every city in Crete (Titus 1:5) and then immediately referred to them as "overseers" (v. 7). On his way to Jerusalem, Paul sent word to Ephesus requesting that the *elders* of the church meet him in Miletus (Ac 20:17). When they arrived, he warned them: "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (v. 28). One theologian adds: "When Paul listed qualifications for the bishop [i.e., overseer] and deacons (1 Tim. 3:1-13), he did not mention elders (though we know from 5:17 that the church had elders), strongly suggesting that bishops [i.e., overseers] and elders referred to the same group" and "In Philippians 1:1 Paul mentioned only bishops [i.e., oversees] and

deacons. Why would he omit elders if there were in fact three classes of leaders? To sum up: the evidence points to only two classes of officers in the church, bishops [i.e., overseers]-elders (or overseeing elders) and deacons" (Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 478).

Regarding the second question, it appears that "pastor" refers to a spiritual gift, not a leadership position in the church. With reference to spiritual gifts, Paul writes that Christ himself "gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers"—i.e., shepherds that teach or teachers that shepherd. In his warning to elders, Paul goes on to say: "Be shepherds [i.e., pastors] of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (Ac 20:28). It seems that elders need to have the spiritual gift of pastor/teacher. According to Paul, elders need to be "able to teach" (1Ti 3:2) and able to "encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it" (Titus 1:9).

By the way, there is a difference between holding a formal leadership position in a church and having a spiritual gift. First, a person may have certain spiritual gifts but not occupy any office in a local church. Second, spiritual gifts are exercised in and out of the local church. Lists of spiritual gifts are found in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28, and Ephesians 4:11. So for example, if a person's gift is "to encourage" (Ro 12:8), that person gives encouragement, both inside and outside of church services, throughout the week, as does the person with a give of serving (v. 7), leading, or showing mercy (v. 8). Third, men and women share the same gifts – the same gift list applies to both. So women can have the gift of pastor/teacher. Fourth, whereas elders by definition are older, spiritually mature individuals, spiritual gifts are given at the moment of salvation to new converts. Finally, our church has many gifted pastor/teachers, some of whom are on staff, but only a few are elders. However, the person we generally refer to as our "lead pastor" is also an elder. Make sense?

1

EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read Titus 1:5-9

5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. 6 An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. 7 Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless — not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. 8 Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. 9 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.

Read another translation

5 The reason I left you in Crete was to set in order the remaining matters and to appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. 6 An elder must be blameless, the husband of one wife, with faithful children who cannot be charged with dissipation or rebellion. 7 For the overseer must be blameless as one entrusted with God's work, not arrogant, not prone to anger, not a drunkard, not violent, not greedy for gain. 8 Instead he must be hospitable, devoted to what is good, sensible, upright, devout, and self-controlled. 9 He must hold firmly to the faithful message as it has been taught, so that he will be able to give exhortation in such healthy teaching and correct those who speak against it. (NET)

Compare 1 Timothy 3:1-7

1 Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. 5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "elder/s" in vv. 5, 6 and "overseer" in v. 7.
- Circle "blameless" in vv. 6, 7.
- Bracket "faithful to his wife" v. 6.
- Bracket "whose children believe" in v. 6.
- Bracket "manages God's household" in v. 7.
- Underline "not" introducing five negative requirements in v. 7.
- Box "Rather" indicating *contrast* in v. 8.
- Bracket each of the six positive requirements in v. 8.
- Circle "hold firmly" in v. 9.
- Box "as" indicating *comparison* in v. 9.
- Box "so that" indicating *purpose* in v. 9.
- Circle "encourage" and "refute" in v. 9.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

- 1. Explain how individuals became "elders" in Cretan churches (Titus 1:5).
- 2. Paul writes, "An *elder* must be blameless" (v. 6), and "an *overseer* . . . must be blameless" (v. 7). What do you infer from that? (Cf. Acts 20:17, 28.)
- 3. The terms "elder" and "overseer" have different connotations. What does each term connote?
- 4. If "blameless" does not mean "sinless," what does it mean?
- 5. Must a person be married and have children to serve as an elder? Explain Paul's domestic requirements (v. 6).
- 6. List the 5 personal "not" traits used to describe one who is "blameless" (v. 7).

7. List the 6 *positive* personal traits used to describe one who is "blameless" (v. 8).

- 8. Explain the *comparison* ("as") in verse 9.
- 9. Identify the twofold *purpose* behind the requirement: "He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message" (v. 9).
- 10. **Discussion:** Some find in the qualifications to serve as an elder, a description of "the ideal character of all Christian men and women" (Liefeld, 314). Talk about what you think.

EXPLORE RESOURCES



Commentary On The Text

"In the order of writing, Paul's letter to Titus almost certainly came on the heels of 1 Timothy and well before 2 Timothy. Like Timothy in Ephesus, Titus was left by Paul on the island of Crete to organize the church and deal with a crisis situation of false teachers who had infiltrated the church" (Walter L. Liefeld, The NIV Application Commentary, 1 and 2 Timohy, Titus, 309). Following the letter's opening, which includes an extended identification of the sender (vv. 1-3), a straightforward identification of the recipient (v. 4a), and Paul's customary greeting (v. 4b), the apostle immediately directs Titus to complete unfinished business on Crete by appointing elders in every town across the island. "Some Cretans were in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost (Acts 2:11). The existence of a Christian community after that was probably what drew Paul there for a visit after his release from Roman imprisonment. This group of believers were apparently not well organized. If Paul made only a brief stop there, it is understandable by he left Titus to rectify the situation" (Liefeld, 312).

Having delegated to Titus the *authority* to appoint elders, Paul gives him 17 qualities he must look for in potential candidates for this leadership position (1:5-9)—a similar list of 15 qualities is found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. The number of elders in each church is difficult to determine. One theologian writes: "Clearly the church in each city (that is, the sum total of the house churches in each city) had elders (Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5), but whether this means that each house church had more than one elder is not certain. In other words, each house church might have had a single elder who, together with the other elders in other churches, constituted the elders of the church in that city" (Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 479). Paul's instructions seem to *rule in* rather than *rule out* the possibility of any given church having more than one elder.

Titus is to be very selective in his appointment of elders. Not every believer qualifies to be an elder—the word itself implies the person must have significant life experience. The list of qualifications that follow indicate that the person must be, generally speaking, "a morally well-rounded person, who will not disgrace the Lord and his church" (Liefeld, 114), a responsible person with unquestionable integrity with the character and abilities required for the job. The specific traits Titus is to look for particularize the general requirement "an elder/overseer must be blameless" (vv.6, 7) – not "sinless" but "of such character that no accusation can be brought against him" (Ryrie, 481). The importance of this character quality is obvious as one commentator explains: "This primary condition of blamelessness is repeated and strongly emphasized by the verb form 'he must' (dei) in v. 7. It should be understood as the basic condition for evaluating the prospective elder with regard to the specific qualifications that follow. Paul was especially sensitive that the witness of the church as a whole could be compromised by valid objections to its chosen leaders" (Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., 1, 2 *Timothy*, *Titus*, NAC, vol. 34, 279).

Paul states the must-be-blameless qualification twice. Domestic qualifications follow its *first* statement in verse 6; personality and character qualifications (vv. 7-8), as well as doctrinal and teaching qualifications (v. 9) follow its second statement in verse 7. Three domestic qualifications are given in verse 6: 1) "the husband of one wife" (lit.; cf. NKJV, ESV, NET), which the NIV properly renders "faithful to his wife" (see note); 2) "with faithful children" (NET; cf. NKJV, HCSB) – which echoes "he must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him" (1Ti 3:4) and which doesn't introduce the new requirement that his children believe – which the NIV unfortunately renders "whose children believe" (see note); and 3) children "not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient." "The elder must have his children under control. The context seems to limit the children to those who are still living at home and are not yet adults, assuming the elder had children" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Titus," 2025 ed., 15, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/titus.pdf).

When it comes to personality and character qualifications, Paul lists five 5 personal "not" traits: 1)" not overbearing," i.e., not arrogant but willing to consider the views of others; 2) "not quick-tempered," i.e., not contentious or prone to anger but peaceable and patient; 3) "not given to drunkenness," i.e., not overindulging in wine, not addicted to alcohol; 4) "not violent," i.e., not a bully, a "striker," not pugnacious; 5) "not pursuing dishonest gain," i.e., free from the love of money (1Ti 3:3), not greedy. Then by way of contrast ("rather"), he lists 6 positive personality and character qualifications: 1) "hospitable," i.e., ready to welcome and entertain guests (1Ti 3:2); 2) "loves what is good," i.e., good things and good people; 3) "self-control," i.e., sober-minded, sensible, prudent; 4) "upright," i.e., fair, equitable, just; 5) "holy," i.e., devout, set apart to God; and 6) "disciplined," i.e., temperate, self-controlled.

Three doctrinal and teaching qualifications conclude the list of requirements: an elder must 1) "hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught" (in other words, remain true to orthodox teaching in keeping with that of the apostles), 2) be able to "encourage others by sound doctrine," i.e., to comfort and edify with respect to the gospel message, and 3) be able to "refute those who oppose it." "The goal of refutation is not to destroy the opponent but rather to restore him to 'sound doctrine.' This necessarily implies that the false teaching to which Paul referred was coming from within the church, i.e., from those who professed Christian faith [cf. vv. 10-16]. Such a situation would also require that the elder be courageous in his willingness to confront a so-called Christian brother" (Lea and Griffin, 286-87).

Word Studies/Notes

- v. 5 *you*, i.e., Titus (cf. v. 4) "Titus, like Timothy, served as the agent of an apostle with apostolic authority. He was in a position of authority over the other local Christians, including the elders" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Titus," 2025 ed., 12, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/titus.pdf).
- vv. 5, 7 elder/s, overseer One class of biblically recognized leaders in the church is "elder" (Gk. presbuteros) or "overseer" (Gk. episkopos); the other is "deacon." "Elder" connotes the age and spiritual maturity of the individual; "overseer" ("bishop" NKJV) connotes the function or role of the individual in the assembly. "If elder and bishop [overseer] refer to the same person, then the principal ministry of the leaders consists of overseeing the work of the church in all its aspects. Elders are not responsible only for the spiritual welfare of the church while deacons care for the financial matters, as is sometime thought. Elders have the oversight of all facets of the work" (Charles C. Ryrie, Basic Theology, 480).
- vv. 6, 7 *blameless* Cf. "above reproach" (ESV); "unreprovable" (GNT); "unaccused" (Homer A. Kent, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 219). "The first requirement for an overseer in 1 Timothy 3:2 is to be 'above reproach' (lit., 'cannot be criticized'). Here in Titus 1:6 the word 'blameless' is a different word (lit., 'cannot be accused'). The dominant idea in both lists is that an elder must have an untarnished reputation" (Walter L. Liefeld, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 312). This, of course, applies to pastor/s in churches that do not use "elder/s" to refer to their spiritual leader/s.
- v. 6 faithful to his wife Cf. "the husband of one wife" (ESV, NET, NKJV); "have only one wife" (GNT); "married only once" (NRSV); cf. 1Ti 3:2. This clause has been variously interpreted as the translations suggest. It certainly disqualifies those who are polygamous and those who are promiscuous. Some argue it disqualifies those who have been divorced and remarried for any reason; others that it even extends to widowers who marry a second time. The following expresses the position of Central Bible Church on this issue, which appears to align with the NIV's translation: "The question is whether the candidate is honorable in his marriage relationship, seeking to uphold his vows, and faithful to his wife . . . We would hold that a candidate that met all the other qualifications and had a blameless reputation could qualify as an elder in special instances where the divorce occurred before they placed their faith in Jesus or in cases where they were not at fault in a biblically justifiable divorce" ("Can a Divorced Man Serve as an Elder?" Theological Study, Central Bible Church, 2021-2022, 5).

- v. 6 whose children believe Cf. "with faithful children" (NET); "having faithful children" (NKJV, HCSB); Gk. tekna echōn pista. "One view understands Paul to be limiting membership in the office to those whose family members all believe [cf. NIV]; pista can certainly bear this meaning. Another view is that the term means, more generally, 'faithful' or 'trustworthy' (1:9; 3:8; 1 Tim. 3:11; compare 1 Tim 1:15; 3:1), which quality is then delineated in the phrase that follows [cf. NET, NKJV, HCSB]. While the first view is possible, it seems to place more stringent requirements on the elder than does 1 Timothy 3:4. Moreover, in view of this parallel, Paul probably means that the elder's children are to be faithful in obeying the head of the house. In fact, the rest of the verse contrasts 'faithful' with the charge of being wild and disobedient, which suggests a more general kind of faithfulness" (Philip H. Towner, 1-2 Timothy & Titus, IVP New Testament Commentary, 255).
- v. 6 manages God's household Cf. "For an overseer as God's steward" (ESV); "For the overseer must be blameless as one entrusted with God's work" (NET). "The 'steward' is responsible for his master's 'house.' The fact that the elder is referred to as 'God's steward' is noteworthy. The elder is clearly considered to be God's servant. He is to do God's work, and he is ultimately accountable to God for his performance . . . Just as a father functions as the 'overseer' (episkopon) in his own home, so also the elder function as 'overseer' in God's house" (Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., 1, 2 Timothy, Titus, NAC, vol. 34, 282-83).
- v. 9 *hold firmly* Cf. "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught" (ESV). "That 'he must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught' constitutes the basis of the elder's doctrinal function as a teacher and apologist of the gospel . . . The elder must 'must hold firmly' to orthodox biblical teaching" (Lea and Griffin, 285).
- v. 9 *encourage, refute* "'Able . . . to exhort in sound doctrine' (v. 9; 1 Tim. 3:2) means that he can encourage and challenge others with the Scriptures. 'Able . . . to refute those who contradict sound doctrine' (v. 9; 1 Tim. 3:2) means that he can point out the error of false teaching and explain why it is wrong" (Constable, 18).

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

To serve as an elder, one must be blameless with respect to their domestic life, personal characteristics, and devotion to correct doctrine.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

For the past several months, the eight men serving as our elder board have traveled through extraordinarily rough terrain. I imagine at the time they accepted their role of guiding and leading our church, their hearts and thoughts were filled with the joyful responsibility of maintaining a well-oiled machine. After the surprise and very sudden resignation of our lead pastor due to decades of moral failure, our elder board rose to the occasion in a spectacular way. Through one of the most difficult times in our long church history, their leadership has proven to be exemplary. They have balanced compassion, kindness, and hope with transparent, decisive, and reliable decision making, all to God's glory. Elders are called to be blameless, men who are above reproach, men who conduct themselves in a way in which no accusation could be brought against them. They oversee the spiritual life of our church, guard sound doctrine, establish policy, and are responsible for the discipline of the church membership. We appreciate our elder board now more than ever! This week, talk to your kids about leadership. Ask them what make a good leader and what makes a bad leader. Help them identify leaders worth following in their school, soccer team, friend group and church. What leadership abilities do you see God developing in your kids? Tell them what you notice and pray that God will continue growing this in your child. Lastly, pray for our elder board as a family. In the months ahead, they'll be making significant decisions for the leadership of our church. Let's prayerfully stand beside them in unity

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Titus 1:5-9.

- 1. Why did Paul leave Titus in Crete?
- 2. What must an elder be?
- 3. What must an elder not be?

What Do You Think?

Why is it important that leaders in the church be people of good character?

What Do You Do?

Do you know any of the CBC Elders? Look them up on our website (wearecentral.org/staff). Write one of them a letter thanking and encouraging them. Bring it to the KidPix for an extra token.

CORE COMPETENCY: Church

I believe God uses the people in the church to do His work.

MEMORY VERSE: 1 Chronicles 29:11

"Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all."

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.	I completed my Bible StuI memorized this week'sI brought my Bible to chuI brought a friend	verse	CENTRAL S
Questions: kids@wearecentral.org	CHILD'S NAME	GRADE	PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17) *I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15) *I choose to do the right things in my relation-ships with others*

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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OUR MISSION

Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.