

Bible Detectives

Case 3

“Looking for the Right Man”

The Mystery

What, if anything, does the Bible teach about the qualifications for leading the church?

Public Opinion

Which of the following qualities are required in a pastor?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must be well educated | <input type="checkbox"/> Must be willing to drive an old car |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must be a seminary graduate | <input type="checkbox"/> Must be a leader |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must be able to read Old Testament Hebrew | <input type="checkbox"/> Must be able to teach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must be able to read New Testament Greek | <input type="checkbox"/> Must “be like us” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must wear a suit and tie to church functions | <input type="checkbox"/> Must be able to relate to people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must be married | <input type="checkbox"/> Must be a worthy example |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must have children | <input type="checkbox"/> Must have short hair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must have well-behaved children | <input type="checkbox"/> Must have a forceful personality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must be a good preacher | <input type="checkbox"/> Must be a people person |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must be a likeable fellow | <input type="checkbox"/> Must enjoy making hospital visits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must be a man | <input type="checkbox"/> Must be dependable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must not be divorced | <input type="checkbox"/> Must be a good debater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must relate to children | <input type="checkbox"/> Must be caring |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must relate to youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Must have a missionary heart |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must relate to everyone | <input type="checkbox"/> Must be friendly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must be available for counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Must not smoke |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must not play cards | <input type="checkbox"/> Must not drink alcohol |

Just the Facts (To Be Completed by Detective)

1. 1 Timothy 3:1-7

- **Who** is writing? _____
- **What** is he writing about? _____

2. episkope, ep-is-kop-ay – Strong’s Number 1984

- **What** does this word mean?
 - “a visiting, an overseeing: – office, office of overseer, visitation” – dictionary
 - “overseer” – New International and New American Standard
 - “bishop” – King James and New King James

“elder” – New Living Translation

“church leader” – The Message

“bishop, superintendent, overseer” – The Amplified Bible

- **Where** else is this word used in Scripture? (You can use Strong’s Concordance to check this.) It is found in four verses. Only the 1 Timothy 3 passage provides insight into the person who is a “bishop” or “overseer”.

Luke 19:44

Acts 1:20

1 Timothy 3:1

1 Peter 2:12

- **Who** does this passage refer to in your church, based upon how the church is organized and operates? _____

3. What qualifications are listed for the bishop / overseer?

- Must be above _____.
- Must be the _____ of but one _____.
- Must be _____.
- Must be _____ - _____.
- Must be _____.
- Must be _____.
- Must be able to _____.
- Must not be given to _____.
- Must not be _____.
- Must be _____.
- Must not be _____.
- Must not be a _____ of _____.
- Must _____ his own family well.
- His children must _____ him and _____ him.
- Must not be a recent _____.
- Must have a _____ with _____.

4. Qualifications

- **How** many qualifications are listed above? _____
- **How** many qualifications related to issues of preaching and teaching? _____
- **How** many qualifications related to issues of character and life? _____
- Does this surprise you? YES NO
- **How** does this compare to your answers from the beginning? _____

- **How** might you as an individual or the church as a whole best examine the qualifications of a candidate for bishop or overseer? _____

For Additional Study

1. What about the title “pastor”?

- **Where** is the word “pastor” found?
 - Only in Ephesians 4:11.
- **What** is the Greek word?
 - “poimen”, Strong’s Concordance 4166.
- **Where** else is “4166” found in Scripture?
 - The Greek word “poimen” is found 18 times in the New Testament. In one of these (Ephesians 4:11), it is translated as “pastor”. In the other 17, it is translated as “shepherd”.
- **What** does “pastor” literally mean? _____

2. What about the title “elder”?

- **Where** is “elder” or “elders” found in the New Testament?
 - It is found in 69 verses.
- **What** is the Greek word?
 - G4245. “presbuteros”, Strong’s Concordance 4245.
- **What** does it mean?
 - an old man; elder(3), elders(57), men of old(1), old men(1), older(1), older man(1), older ones(1), older women(1).

3. Is an “elder” the same as “pastor” or “bishop”?

- **Titus 1:5-9** – Paul instructs Titus to appoint elders, then immediately describes the qualification. Here, Paul seems to use the word “elder” and “overseer” (or “bishop”) to refer to the same person. The list of qualifications here is very similar to the qualifications from “overseer” that we read about in 1 Timothy 3.
- **What** do you think? Does “elder” refer to the same “position” as “bishop” or “overseer”? _____

4. Lions and Tigers and Bears, Oh My

We’ve found that there are many biblical terms for church leaders: bishops, overseers, pastor (shepherd), elder. (The Bible also identifies others called deacons.) Various churches interpret these passages differently, and have therefore organized themselves differently.

- In some churches, “bishop”, “pastor”, “elder” are viewed as different titles for the same person.
- In some churches, elders and bishops are considered the same, but the pastor is not an elder or bishop. Instead, the elders provide leadership and a sound Bible teacher is hired to be the pastor-teacher.
- In some churches, the bishop and pastor are considered the same. The pastor provides the leadership and is assisted by elders.
- In some churches, an elder is simply considered an “older, mature Christian man” and it is not an “official” designation.

5. Questions we have not answered.

- What is a deacon? What does a deacon do? What are the qualifications?
- Can a church have more than one pastor, elder, overseer?
- Should a church have more than one pastor, elder, overseer?
- How are pastors and elders related? Are they the same, or different?

In Closing...

This has been a *very brief* introduction to the subject of church “offices” and qualifications for service. Some additional material has been referenced.

This is a complex subject, about which knowledgeable Christians have different opinions.

The Bible may give freedom for how a church is organized, but does give guidelines for the qualifications for those that serve and lead. The qualifications are strikingly focused on lifestyle and character.