



## ***Biblical Character: Qualities in Maturing Christians and Leaders***

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**Purpose—An Assessment Tool for Leaders:** As your church leaders set about each year to consider individual members for offices in the church, they look to the Word of God and the Spirit of God for guidance in their selections. What are the biblical character traits to consider in selecting those who will be added to the leadership team to serve the Lord in leadership ministries in the church?

1. Primarily, this is a tool for assessing leadership readiness to be used with individual and by groups.
2. This tool can be used personally, in discipling others, and as a mentoring tool in small groups.
3. Also, pastors can modify and adopt this tool as a statement of their local church's position on the meaning of the specific biblical characteristics of leadership in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-11.

**Scope:** The monograph below can be used in several ways:

**Generally**, this study constitutes a broad definition of Biblical character that every maturing believer should find useful and challenging to his or her personal spiritual development.

**Specifically**, the material below deals with the characteristics Paul lists for Timothy and Titus for selecting elders and deacons in local churches (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11).

Other valuable considerations, assessments, and training for leaders include such things as the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:21-22), calling, desire to serve, profiles of gifting, abilities, training and experience (G.A.T.E.), relational skills, teamwork skills, and a humble servant-leadership heart.

**Background:** The qualities in this exercise are Christ-like benchmarks of maturity for leaders in order to serve Christ well, to model His life, and to safeguard His glory. But please remember:

- **Marks of Maturity:** It should be the goal of every church to develop Christlikeness in every child of the Heavenly Father. Paul gives us a “checklist” that defines Christian maturity for selection of both elders (pastors) and lay ministers (deacons and deaconesses) who serve in church ministry.
- **Assessment in Present Time:** In general, these biblical qualities refer to observable character in present time. They are not so much for probing personal history (2 Corinthians 5:17). The question is—What are the marks of maturity that can be celebrated today which show the evidence of the redemptive power and presence of Christ enthroned within? While many of us may have regrettable sin, failure, and injury in our past, this assessment looks for the evidence of redemptive grace at present. Every church family should offer people a safe place to repent, heal, grow, and serve. After all, every redeemed sinner is a trophy of God's grace!
- **Caution Against Judging and Pride:** We must guard against legalism, elitism, and egotism. The primary leadership quality is humility. Jesus was “. . . gentle and humble in heart.” (Matt. 11:29)
- **Freedom to Grow:** Consider that individual maturity is a relative thing. We all are growing toward Christlikeness, Who is the absolute standard. Yet none of us has arrived. Leaders are not “perfect” as compared to Jesus but are relatively mature as seen within the context of a local church body.
- **Self-Assessment:** The biblical checklist below can help you identify areas in your life you would like to develop further. If your self-assessment reveals issues that need attention, consider talking with your pastors, elders, and/or mature, trusted friend about these issues. Take steps to grow.

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## **A Mature Christian should be . . .**

### **❑ 1. Above Reproach** (1 Timothy 3:3); **Blameless** (Titus 1:6-7).

Literally, “free from legal charges in court.” A mature Christian has nothing in his life that could be called into question should anyone be seeking grounds for an accusation.

### **❑ 2. Husband of One Wife** (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6).

Literally, “a one-woman man.” He is non-flirtatious, pure in regard to the opposite sex, and singular in regard to his wife. He guards his own thought life, moral purity, and testimony.

**Note:** Church teachings differ on the meaning here. Some see prohibition from highest leadership for any divorced person. Others, the present writer included, hold that this maturity quality relates to evident character in present time. It does not necessarily demand that leaders be married, nor does it automatically prohibit people with divorce in their history from serving in Church leadership. With genuine repentance and/or adequate healing of hurts from a divorce he did not initiate, God’s grace can free such Christian to serve the Lord with gladness. (To understand the Biblical foundation on which this position rests, please refer to “The State of the Repentant Divorcee,” by Dr. David Niquette, and “The Husband of One Wife’ Requirement in 1 Timothy 3:2,” by Dr. Ed. Glasscock.)

### **❑ 3. Temperate** (1 Timothy 3:2); **Disciplined** (Titus 1:8).

He lives a balanced life. He enjoys things in moderation, never in excess. He is stable and sober in all things, showing self-restraint. The desires of the flesh are under control.

### **❑ 4. Self-Controlled** (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8).

Literally, “prudent.” This man is wise, sensible and has sound judgment. He can make disciplined decisions and choices. He “acts” on truth rather than “reacts” from emotions.

### **❑ 5. Respectable** (1 Timothy 3:2).

Literally, “orderly.” His life is in order, under control. He has gained the respect of his peers. Those who observe him see his orderliness. He works with integrity and gets his tasks done.

### **❑ 6. Hospitable** (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8).

Literally, “a lover of strangers.” He takes relational initiative with friends and neighbors. He uses his money, time, effort -- even his home -- to show love and help people in need.

### **❑ 7. Able to Teach** (1 Timothy 3:2); **Exhort in Sound Doctrine** (Titus 1:8).

Literally, “ready, willing and able to teach.” He is able to persuade (Titus 1:9), to reiterate doctrine (2 Tim. 2:2). He knows Scripture well and can help others understand and apply it.

**Note:** As this qualification relates to elders, this character quality is not to be measured in terms of the formal classroom lecture style as understood within recent Western culture. An elder must be grounded in the Word of God, and able to assist members to understand and apply Scripture to their lives, either in a one-to-one or a group setting.

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## **A Mature Christian should be . . . (Continued)**

### **❑ 8. Not Given to Drunkenness** (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7).

He must recognize the dangers and sinfulness of excessive drinking. Although Scripture does not teach total abstinence from alcohol, a mature Christian must not drink in excess, ever. Nor should a maturing Christian put a stumbling block before others.

### **❑ 9. Not Violent** (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7).

This refers to physical violence. He is a gentleman, not picking fights or intimidating others. He is not guilty of domestic violence, losing control of his emotions.

### **❑ 10. Gentle** (1 Timothy 3:3); **Not Quick Tempered** (Titus 1:7).

He handles difficult people and situations in a manner that is gracious and peaceable. He is forbearing, manifesting great patience and gentleness.

### **❑ 11. Not Quarrelsome** (1 Timothy 3:3); **Not Over-bearing** (Titus 1:7).

He must not be contentious, self-willed, not narcissistic. He must not demand his own way regardless of others. He is conciliatory, giving others freedom to choose (in non-essentials).

### **❑ 12. Not a Lover of Money** (1 Timothy 3:3); **Not Pursuing Dishonest Gain** (Titus 1:7).

He must not love money or material possessions, and certainly must not pursue them by dishonest means. The evils of such idolatry are seen in Matthew 6:24 and 1 Timothy 6:9-10.

### **❑ 13. Manage Own Family Well** (1 Timothy 1:4).

The leadership a man gives to his home and family will reflect the balance of leadership he would bring to the family of God. He does not sacrifice his family for his Christian service.

### **❑ 14. Children Are Obedient** (1 Timothy 1:4); **Believing/Obedient Children** (Titus 1:6).

If he is married, his wife and children come first. As he demonstrates effectiveness in nurturing godliness in his children, he is positioned for effective nurture of the church family.

**Note:** By way of clarification, in assessing leaders, we must consider the maturation dynamic and the personal accountability of children who have grown up to majority years. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." As children grow toward majority years, they must internalize their values as a part of maturing into adulthood. This can often look like rebellion in the teen years. Time will show the genuineness of this internalization of faith. This qualification targets children who are still living at home. (Read Ezekiel 18 as a balancing principle regarding the moral responsibility of each generation.)

### **❑ 15. Not a New Convert** (1 Timothy 1:6).

Literally, "not a newly planted one." New Christians need time to grow and mature. He must undergo testing of faith as he learns to apply God's truth to life. Chronic pridefulness is a disqualifier. Time is needed to grow into Christlikeness. Jesus was "meek and lowly of heart."

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## **A Mature Christian should be . . . (Continued)**

### 16. **Good Reputation** (1 Timothy 1:7).

He should be respected and honorable inside and outside the church. He must be one to whom people submit without difficulty, and who draws people toward willing obedience to Jesus.

### 17. **Loves What Is Good** (Titus 1:8).

He sets his mind on what is noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8). And he loves the Lord more than he loves what is in the world (I John 2:15-17).

### 18. **Upright** (Titus 1:8).

Literally, “just.” He is impartial, and his impartiality protects the church from division and strife. While he is uncompromising on sound biblical doctrine, at the same time he is passionate, treating everyone fairly and equally.

### 19. **Holy** (Titus 1:8).

He must be a devout man. His love for God has led him to a consecration of his life to God’s glory and service. He separates himself from unholy worldliness and is set apart to God.

### 20. **Holding Firmly to the Word** (Titus 1:8).

He loves, trusts, and demonstrates a deep commitment to the Word of God. He continually studies the Bible for himself, hungry to know God deeper as He is revealed in Scripture.

### 21. **Refute False Teachers** (Titus 1:8).

Spiritual leaders (particularly pastors and elders) fulfill a shepherding function, not only of nurture, but of protection of the flock from false teachers and heretical teachings (2 Tim. 2:23-26).

**Postscript:** Well, how did you do? Look back at the boxes you checked. There is hope and joy in setting these matters as goals for growth. Again, no one is perfect, except Jesus our perfect Lord and Savior. God and time are on your side. And so are the pastors and leaders of your church. Don’t be afraid to engage in humble, healthy conversation with folks that can mentor you, encourage you, and celebrate your heart’s awakening passion to be more like Christ. And have you considered the value of being part of a small group in your church? Remember:

**MATURITY COMES ABOUT AS TRUTH IS APPLIED TO LIFE**  
**WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF RELATIONSHIPS.**

### **→ Additional clarity on the maturity and role of those identified as qualified to be elders:**

**1 Peter 5:1-4** ESV. <sup>1</sup> *So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:* <sup>2</sup> *shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;* <sup>3</sup> *not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.* <sup>4</sup> *And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*