

An Elder Must Be Hospitable

1 Timothy 3

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Biblical Character of Elder (1 Timothy 3)

1. Above Reproach
2. Husband of one wife
3. Sober minded
4. Self-controlled
5. Respectable
6. Hospitable
7. Able to teach
8. Not drunkard
9. Not violent
10. Not quarrelsome
11. Not lover of money
12. Manage household well
13. Not recent convert
14. Good reputation with outsiders

Titus 1

1. Above reproach
2. Husband of one wife
3. Children are believers
4. No debauchery/insubordination
5. Not arrogant
6. Not quick tempered
7. Not drunkard
8. Not violent
9. Greedy for gain
10. Hospitable
11. Lover of good
12. Self-controlled
13. Upright
14. Holy
15. Disciplined
16. Holds firm to the Word
17. Able to give instruction in sound doctrine
18. Rebuking those who contradict it

A “noble” task demands a noble man. (Gk. word, *kalou*. Noble, virtuous, valuable – speaks to moral virtue) The task of elder is a virtuous responsibility, and it requires a man of equal quality.

Proverbs 19:10; 26:6; 30:22 – In each situation the writer insists that it is foolish to trust a man whose character does not match the noble task to which he has been entrusted. Then why would we entrust the most noble task of all to men whose character lacks the weight required to lead Jesus’ church?

The Bible requires a noble man for this noble task but then goes on to define what noble means in this context.

1. **Above Reproach** – This means that one is free from any offense or disgraceful mark against one’s character. Critics are unable to legitimately discredit or prove him unworthy of service because no evidence can be found to support accusations.
2. **Husband of one wife** – This means literally, “*a one-woman kind of man.*” Paul is not referring to the marital status of the potential elder, but rather to the quality of his character. This implies loyalty and faithfulness to one woman. An elder must be exclusively devoted to his wife physically, emotionally, and in every other way and never prove to be flirtatious or careless in his dealings with other women (1 Tim. 3:2; Ephesians 5:25). In his singular devotion to his wife, the elder models the love which Jesus has for his bride.
3. **Sober minded** – This speaks to a man’s spiritual alertness. In similar fashion as wine dulls our physical senses, sometimes our spiritual senses can become dulled. An elder must be spiritually sober, alert, vigilant, and watchful (1 Peter 5:8).
 - Sin dulls our spiritual senses
 - Life without the Bible dulls our spiritual senses
 - Life without the church dulls our spiritual senses
 - Life lived on your iPhone dulls your spiritual senses
4. **Self-controlled** – An elder must be balanced in his emotions, thinking, and conduct. He should not be given to excesses and extremes. He is controlled by truth rather than by his circumstances (James 1:6-8).
5. **Respectable** – The life of an elder must be orderly and free of chaos in every area (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12). A man whose life is not properly ordered to the principles of God’s Word in every aspect will not be able to establish order in the church.

6. **Hospitable** – “to love strangers” (Job 31:32; Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9; Luke 14:12; 3 John 5-8). To be hospitable means that the elder’s home is the center of his ministry to others. The door of his home is open to friends and strangers alike. Unlike the western thinking that “a man’s house is his castle,” the Bible calls us to see our house/home not as a place of retreat and withdrawal but the main place of ministry engagement.

An open home is a sign of an open heart and a loving, sacrificial, serving spirit. A lack of hospitality is a sure sign of selfish, lifeless, loveless Christianity.” Hospitality is a tangible, outward display of godly character.

“In the 1970s, the typical household entertained more than once a month,” the article reports. “But from the late 1970s to the late 1990s, the frequency of hosting friends for parties, games, dinners, and so on declined by 45 percent, according to data gathered by Robert Putnam.”

Hospitality in the ancient world was much more than merely inviting someone to dinner from time to time. In order to understand what hospitality should look like in our lives we have to first understand what it meant to Paul, Timothy, and Titus (Luke 14:12).

Hospitality meant something radically different to Paul’s audience than it does to our American ears. When the Bible speaks of hospitality it is speaking of what it was to them NOT what it means to us in our culture.

Inns were notoriously dangerous, filthy, and expensive in Paul’s day. Consequently, Christian families and communities developed a system of travel that enabled family members to avoid the filthy inns and brothels where most travelers lodged. Over time children and grandchildren continued to use this vast network of hospitality and would often find themselves staying in someone’s home that they themselves did not know or had ever met (token, tally).

The reason that we must be deeply committed to radical hospitality is because this is how we take the hand of a stranger and put it in the hand of the Savior, to bridge hostile worlds, and to add to the family of God.

The Christian home is the place where we bring the church to the people!

Genesis 19 – Lot and the angels

“Behold I stand at the door and knock...” Rev 3:2

Hospitality is not merely one of many suggested options for how to demonstrate God’s love to people. Hospitality is the very method for engaging a lost world with the gospel. It is the very method that Jesus himself employed and modeled for being light in a dark world. What the Bible calls hospitality is one of prominent ways that Jesus engaged hurting people and in so doing modeled for us how to do it like him! If you truly desire to serve and minister like Jesus, then all you’ve got to do is be hospitable.

We spend so much of our time trying to be innovative and creative about how to engage people and make disciples and all the while all we need to do is look to Jesus.

“The Son of Man came eating and drinking...” (Luke 7:34).

“Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!” 7:34

Of all the ways in which Jesus was known to those around him, he was known as someone who was always eating and drinking.

Luke 5:33 “...you eat and drink.”

Luke 5 – Jesus eating in Matthew’s house

Luke 7 – Jesus anointed in Simon’s house during dinner

Luke 9 – Jesus feeds 5000

Luke 10 – Jesus eats in home of Martha and Mary

Luke 11- Jesus condemns Pharisees during a meal

Luke 14 – Jesus urges people to invite poor to their meals rather than their friend during a meal.

Luke 19 – Jesus invites himself to dinner at Zacchaeus’ house.

Luke 22 – Last Supper

Luke 24 – The risen Lord shares meal with disciples on Road to Emmaus.

Luke 22:28-29

Acts 28: 30-31 – Paul practiced hospitality even while on house arrest.

1. Christian hospitality is a visible expression of the gospel.
2. Christian hospitality is the biblical method for fruitful kingdom expansion.

Many people demand new and innovative programs in order to make the church bigger. This requires a few professional, vocational ministers to simply do what we pay them to do. This is the easy way. This requires only a few people to pay the price for discipleship. Christ models for us a far different way with a different objective all together. Christ's way requires every member of the body to pay the price for kingdom expansion.

The Bible calls us to see that our homes are to be the very center of our gospel lives and the goal is to bring people close to us as we seek to bring them close to Jesus. Do you not see that if your home is properly ordered, peaceful, filled with love, free from chaos, and ruled by Jesus, then it is a microcosm of the kingdom of God? For a stranger to be welcomed into the peaceful, ordered space where I dwell is to put on display the peaceful, ordered space where Christ dwells and rules. When a stranger gains access to my own (without saying it), we are communicating that they also have access to God and his space. When I bring them to my table and offer my food that I have purchased and now am willing to share, I am communicating in the strongest possible way that there is a greater table where they can sit and partake of the living bread and the living water.

- How many people from your church have you invited into your home for a meal? When was the last time someone stayed the night?
- Do others come to you when they need help, or do you give the impression that you don't want to be bothered?
- Is your family intentional about welcoming others into your home, even if they are different from you or if they make you feel awkward and uncomfortable?

An elder MUST BE one who understands the place of his home in discipleship and routinely practices table fellowship by inviting, not only the church family but also strangers ("outsiders") into his home to experience the love of Jesus.

Recommended Reading -

The Gospel Comes with a Housekey - <https://a.co/d/eHzSiKA>

The Art of Neighboring - <https://a.co/d/5743RPJ>

A Meal with Jesus - <https://a.co/d/dDa5hRt>