

**QR SLIDE FIRST THING - CHRIS MARTIN**

- Welcome & Connect Table
- **SLIDE** Serve Teams
- **SLIDE** All Stars Club

**INTRODUCTION 1 TIMOTHY SLIDE**

Hey, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do,

- please grab them and turn to 1 Timothy chapter 3.

They had hard-backed black bibles as you came in...

- You'll find 1 Timothy 3 on page **992**.

**INTRODUCTION**

So, for the last few weeks,  
we've been walking through the book of 1 Timothy.

- And this book is a letter from a seasoned church planter, Paul,
  - to a younger pastor, Timothy,
    - talking about what the church is...
    - what it isn't...
    - how it functions...
    - and how it works.

And last week's text was a doozie, right?!?

- I mean, it was legitimately the most difficult text and sermon...
- I've had to preach in my almost 10-years as a Lead Pastor.

So, chapter 2 focused on how we come to the church gatherings.

## EXPLAIN: COMPLEMENTARIANISM

And I told you that we hold the position known as complementarianism.

- Simply put, complementarianism is the belief...
- that God made men and women equal AND distinctive:
  - equal in value and dignity...
  - and distinctive in certain responsibilities and roles.

And that conviction...

- has been the historical norm...
- for the church across the world...
- until recent decades...
  - where it has become a center of a storm.

Now, that was a hard one for some to hear,

- and I hope you've had some time...
- to process with your people...
- and pray about that.

But just a reminder,

- where you fall on that issue is not ESSENTIAL for salvation.
- It is a second tier issue of IMPORTANCE, but it's not essential.

## EXPLAIN: ELDERS

Now, today's text is not nearly as heavy.

This week we'll talk about **SLIDE ELDERS**

That's the Biblical word for the spiritual leaders of a local church:

- The leaders of a local church are ELDERS...
  - sometimes translated *overseers*...
  - sometimes translated *pastors*.
- We use the word ELDERS.

And as with last week's text:

- while it is clear that women are capable...
- of all that is required of elders...
  - the qualification traits are actually things...
  - we would expect of any mature Christian...
- while women are capable...
  - there is no New Testament evidence...
  - that women were appointed elders of churches.

So, who are ELDERS, and what do they do?

Well, in chapter 3:

- Paul moves from the gathering of the church...
- to those who qualify to lead and oversee the church.

### **ILLUSTRATION: CONFUSION**

Now, in our cultural moment, elders are kinda a weird animal to talk about.

Cause maybe when you think elders...

- you think of a Jedi counsel...
- or, like, elves in Lord of the Rings...

Or maybe you think about the Mormon elder that knocks on your door...

- Elder Johnson...
  - looks like he's 16...
    - just exhausted from riding that bike...

And even if you grew up in church...

- I mean, many grew up in churches where there weren't elders...
  - but there were board members, and staff.

And maybe some of you come from churches...

- where there were elders...
- but it went really bad.
  - Maybe there were men who were domineering...
  - and there were men who were power hungry...
  - and there were those who were demanding...
    - and who didn't do...
    - what I'm going to show you...
    - God has asked them to do.
- Maybe you've been a part of church splits...
  - because of bad leadership...
  - or you've seen that type of thing happen.
- Because it happens all the time.

And so maybe...

- it's not that you're coming in here...
  - and you DON'T understand it...
- but rather that you've SEEN it...
  - and DON'T want any part of it!

## **TRANSITION**

Well, Fathom Church,

- since we planted this church,
- has been an elder guided church.

A group of men, who the members vote into this role...

- shepherd us...
- and lead us...
- and walk with us.

So, we're really only gonna ask one question today:

- who are elders?
- **SLIDE WHO ARE THEY?**

I want to answer that question...

- by simply walking through this list of qualifications...
  - that Paul gives to Timothy...
- and hopefully paint a picture of the kind of man...
  - that God calls to lead his church.

So, let's get going. 1 Timothy chapter 3, starting in verse 1:

## 1 TIMOTHY 3:1

[1] The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.

## ASPIRATION

So, the first qualification for an elder is ASPIRATION.

You've gotta want it.

- Faithful eldering demands much of you...
- and so if you don't have an inner desire for the role...
- you can burn out.

Of course, that doesn't mean...

- that everyone who WANTS to be an elder is qualified...
- but it does mean a lack of desire is a problem.

Now, if you aren't reading this text correctly, your gut response might be,

- *"Well, what kind of man..."*
- *DOESN'T aspire to have power and authority?"*

**BUT THAT'S NOT THE CALL OF AN ELDER!**

- The call of an elder is not power and authority.
- The call of an elder is sacrifice and serving.

Elders are to be the type of men...

- who so love the local church...
- and have so experienced the grace and mercy of Jesus...
- that they'll go,
  - *"I so love these people...*
    - *that I'll sacrifice for these people...*
    - *I'll open my life to these people...*
    - *I'll give myself for these people."*

So, if you have baggage around bad elders or church leaders...

what the Bible says is,

- *"Don't let a man be an elder...*
  - *who wouldn't be your servant!*
- *If he's not willing to sacrifice for you...*
  - *then he's got no business leading.*
- *If he's not willing to give of himself so that you might grow...*
  - *then don't trust him."*

I mean, I have to call the Elders in on weekends when stuff happens.

- We are in hospitals...
- and counseling rooms...
- and handling conflict.
  - It's really, very inglorious work.
  - It's sacrifice.

And we need men who know that's what they're signing up for.

## EXPLAIN: PROCESS

This is why we built a LONG elder process here at Fathom.

- We want to have known the man for at least two years.
- And only then do we pursue candidacy with them...
  - which lasts at least another 6 months.
- And during that candidacy...
  - I publicly ask multiple times...
  - if you know anything sketchy about a guy...
    - because we don't want sketchy elders.

Now, even that system is no guarantee,

- because even the best of men...
- are men at best.

But that's the first qualification for an elder: ASPIRATION.

Verse 2:

### 1 TIMOTHY 3:2

[2] Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, [3] not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

### ABOVE REPROACH

So, let's just take this list one-by-one.

The next qualification is they are **ABOVE REPROACH**.

- This means that there are no blatant signs of sin in him.
  - This doesn't mean an elder doesn't sin...right?
- If that were the case, we would need to fire all our elders.

But this means that we should never present a potential elder to the body...

- and for you to go, *“Him? Are you kidding me?”*

That really should never happen if you vet your elder candidates well.

- Like, the people should be excited...
- about the men who are leading them.

He should be **ABOVE REPROACH**.

## **ONE-WOMAN MAN**

The next phrase is **the husband of one wife**.

Now, there is some debate around this phrase.

- Some will say this means single guys cannot be elders...
  - but that can't be because the Apostle Paul was single,
    - and he actually says it is good to be single...
    - for the focus you can have on the Gospel.
- And then you have some who will argue...
  - that this means a divorced man cannot be an elder.
    - But I don't think that's Biblically supportable.

So, I think the best interpretation is that he is a ONE-WOMAN MAN.

- That means he thinks about that one woman.
- He's for that one woman.
- He's with that one woman.
- He's a ONE-WOMAN MAN.
  - He's not marked by fantasies about other women.
  - He's not flirtatious with other women.
  - He's not looking at porn...
    - or being sexually deviant in other ways.
- He's a ONE-WOMAN MAN.



## SOBER-MINDED

Next, he's **SOBER-MINDED**.

- There's not a huge gap between how he sees himself...
  - and how he actually is.
- He sees himself correctly.

He is sober of mind! Ok?

There are no first three episodes of American Idol for an elder. You got me?

- There's not an, "I can sing."
  - when the rest of the world is like,
  - "Oh, please don't sing."

He's **SOBER-MINDED**.

- He has to see himself well...
- he has to understand where he's weak...
- he has to understand where he's strong...
- and he has to be dialed into how God made him.

## SELF-CONTROLLED

Next, he's **SELF-CONTROLLED**.

That means he's not controlled by things.

- So, he can like good food...
  - but he's not a glutton.
- He can like good drink...
  - but he's not a drunk...
- He skis...
  - but he's not building his whole life around it.
- He works out...
  - but he's not obsessed with getting yoked.

- Like I know you guys all think I'm ripped...
- but I assure you I'm not...

And listen, maybe it's none of these things...

- I'm just trying to give examples, ok?

My point is an elder is in control of himself.

- His appetites and his desires don't rule him...
- but his love for the Lord rules him.

## RESPECTABLE

Next, an elder is **RESPECTABLE**.

- He lives his life in such a way that he draws respect.
- And this respect is known both inside and outside the church.

This is reiterated in verse 7:

### 1 TIMOTHY 3:7

**[7] Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.**

He is **thought well of by outsiders**.

- So, this guy is respected in church.
  - But he's respected in his work life.
  - He's respected in his hobbies.
  - He's respected in his neighborhood.

This is why I spend so much time talking about how you are with neighbors.

- They may think,
  - *"He's a religious weirdo, but the dude's legit.*
  - *He actually believes what he says he believes."*

## HOSPITABLE

An elder is **HOSPITABLE**.

Now, this one has been usurped by people...

- who think hospitality is, like, making a nice salad.

I was in the deep South for a wedding.

And people kept asking me this question:

- *“Well, how do you like our Southern hospitality?”*
  - And my first thought was, “should you really have to ask?”
  - It’d be like me asking, “So, do you like how good I look?”

Southern hospitality?

- You mean the pretentious way you have me over...
  - give me sweet tea...
    - and make me feel less than you?
- Is that what you mean?
  - Cause I don’t really like that!

HOSPITALITY isn’t a trait that says...

- an elder has to be able to grill up some ribs...
- and have us all over for a BBQ...
  - though that doesn’t hurt.

HOSPITALITY means...

- that he loves people.
- He loves to minister to people.
  - So, this guy is getting with people.
  - Having people over.
    - Getting to know them.
    - Being involved in their lives.

That’s HOSPITALITY.

## TEACHING

Next, they are **able to teach**.

Now, this gets, in part, back to what we talked about last week.

- But this isn't specifically talking about...
- teaching or preaching in the assembly of the church...
- on Sunday mornings.

This just means they can answer you from the Word of God.

- If you've got questions...
- they can navigate God's truths to help you.

So, sometimes an elder other than me will preach here at Fathom.

- But an elder doesn't HAVE to be an eloquent preacher.
- He does, though, HAVE to be able to handle God's Word...
  - effectively and clearly.

## DRUNK

Ninth, they're **not a drunkard**.

- Now that sounds a lot like self-controlled...
- it sounds like a no-brainer...
- but apparently it needed to be in here.

So, just a general rule: drunks don't make good elders.

But this leads to a word about addiction.

- There are all kinds of addictions...
- but the indication is that an Elder should not be...
  - an addicted-type person to anything

That doesn't mean a brother can't enjoy a glass of whatever...

But it does mean that he doesn't HAVE TO HAVE IT to go to bed at night.

## CONFLICT

Now, I think the next couple go together.

- He's not violent but gentle, and he's not quarrelsome.
- Now, let me explain what I think these mean.

You can get yourself in trouble as a church...

- if you have guys who love CONFLICT.
  - If your elders LOVE CONFLICT that's a bad thing.

But if they're so conflict averse, that they're afraid to get into CONFLICT...

- that's a bad thing, too.
  - So, what you need are men who don't like CONFLICT,
  - but who aren't afraid to get into it...if they have to.

If you get guys who just love CONFLICT...

- then you're gonna have guys just policing...
- and waiting for someone to pounce on.

But if you get someone who's so gentle...

- that he's not willing to shoot a wolf,
  - well then, the sheep are going to get hurt.

So, you need men who don't like CONFLICT but aren't CONFLICT averse.

## GREEDY

The next one is that an elder is not a lover of money.

He's not GREEDY.

- It doesn't mean he doesn't make money.
- It doesn't mean he doesn't have money.

It means that money doesn't control him.

He sees money for what it is.

Now, the 13th qualification is in verses 4-5:

## 1 TIMOTHY 3:4-5

[4] He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, [5] for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

## HOME

So, what we just read is that the home is a proving ground for ministry.

Now why?

- Because few things for a man...
- are going to put the man against his flesh...
- like the call to be a Godly husband and a Godly father.

So, home is where we prove our quality for ministry.

This is why we tell elders that their home is their first ministry!

Now, here's how that looks...men:

- you work hard at your job,
  - and then...
  - when you get home...
- second shift begins, ok?

So, if you've got young kids...

- and mamma's been with the babies all day...
- and she's about to lose it!
  - Well, you're up to bat!
    - And so, you take that one who's screaming,
    - and you clean up that pile of who-knows-what,
    - and you change all the diapers,
    - and you give them the bath,
    - and you get them to bed.

And if you've got older kids...

- You're lovingly disciplining them...
- and you're driving them to practice...
- and you're waiting up for them to come home from the dance...
- and you're up late having deep conversations with them...
  - for whatever reason, older kids wanna talk at night!

And listen, once the kids are down, it's still not your time!

Cause now it's time for you to pursue your girl, ok?

- You're checking on her heart.
- You're encouraging her to grow and flourish.
- You're giving her a shoulder rub...
  - WITH NO STRINGS ATTACHED! You following me?

You say, *"so, where's my time? When do I get some time!?"*

- YOU GET NO TIME!

You want some time?

- Get up early...before they do!
  - 5:30?
  - 5?
  - 4:30?
- That's your time!
  - 5am until whenever they get up...
  - and this whole thing starts again.

*"Well, I don't like that."*

- Hey, I love you...stay single.
  - Stay single if you don't like that,
  - because that's what God's called you to be as a man.
  - A servant to your wife and to your children.

So, we examine our elder candidate's family.

- How's his wife doing?
- We want to see his kids.
  - Is he leading them with dignity?

Now, a man cannot CONTROL his children.

- So, I'm not saying his kids are perfect:
  - all-state AWANA champs,
    - decked out like Patton.
  - never making a mess,
  - always saying, "yes, Father, please read us the Bible."

But does he love them in a way that's dignified, gracious, fair, and firm.

- Home is going to be a test...
- of whether a man is going to touch...
- the household of God.
  - Because if I'm not willing to serve my wife...
    - and I'm not willing to serve my children...
  - then you can be darn sure that I won't do it for the church.

And then the last one is in verse 6, cause we covered verse 7 earlier.

## 1 TIMOTHY 3:6

[6] He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.

## MATURE

Now, this doesn't necessarily have to do with age, but it kinda does.

- Paul says that an elder must be a mature believer.
- He cannot be a recent convert.



Now, let me tell you something precautionary...

- a new Christian can LOOK like they're mature. Right?
- All the evidence of maturity might be there.
  - Cause you can be putting sin to death.
  - And you can start using your gifts and talents.
  - And you can be zealous and excited and all in for Jesus.
- And all that can LOOK like maturity.

**But real Christians maturity takes two things: TIME and TRIALS.**

**THERE IS NO FAST TRACK FOR CHRISTIAN MATURITY!**

An elder's got to have been through some seasons in his faith journey.

- How has he weathered the storms in life?
- How has he persevered in seasons of plenty...
  - and seasons of want?

This is all a part of the faithful Christian walk.

- So, if you are a recent convert...
- focus on sinking your roots more deeply into Christ.
  - Watch out for spiritual pride.
  - You have much testing and growing ahead.

But if you get an immature believer in the elder room...

- he might become prideful.

## **CHARACTER NOT SKILL**

Now that's the list. That's WHO AN ELDER IS.

And I want to point out one more thing before we move on.

- Did you notice that there is only one thing in there that's a skill?
  - **He must be able to teach.**
- Everything else is a character trait!

We don't gauge elders by what they can do...  
but rather, by the type of men they are.

- So, in some churches
  - it's the most gifted...
  - the men with the most money...
  - the men with the most prestigious jobs...
- who get to be leaders...
- but that's not what a biblical elder is!

It's all about their character.

And actually, those character traits...

- are what every disciple of Jesus should be pursuing...
- men and women.

They are marks of maturity.

## CONCLUSION

So, then, I'd like to read one more verse about elders...  
as we start to wrap this thing up.

Hebrews 13 says this:

### **SLIDE HEBREWS 13:17**

[17] Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

## SUBMIT TO ELDERS

Obey your leaders and submit to them.

Wildly popular ideas here!

Right? But here's what I'd say on this verse:

- Never follow a church elder...
- who does not understand...
- that he will give an account for you.

Never follow a pastor or an elder...

- who is not painfully aware that one day...
  - after he quits breathing...
- he will stand in front of Jesus...
- and give an account for how...
  - he led,
  - treated,
  - and spent his life on the church.

But where you do have elders...

- who will submit to Christ...
- who will pray for you...
- and plead for you...
- and not shirk the hard things...
- and who will lead by example.

The Bible says, follow those guys.

And then it just says,

- Hey, don't try to wear them down, man.
- What advantage is it to you if your elders are like,
  - "God, I really hate them.
  - Please move them to Mission Hills. Amen."

It's **of no advantage to you** to beat down spiritual leadership.

## CONCLUSION

So, friends, that's **SLIDE W/PADS ELDERS**

There's more to be said, but that's all we've got time for.

So, let me end with this.

- I completely understand and get why some of you...
- don't want to submit to the elders of a church.

Some of you have been burned very badly.

- Some of you were at a place where all-of-a-sudden...
  - the pastor was like a dictator...right?
  - He became the king.
- Some of you were at places where...
  - there were wars waged in back rooms and political strife.
- Some of you come from places where...
  - you were shunned...
  - sinned against...
  - even abused...
- Some of you have come from those backgrounds, I get it.

We've actually come from some of those places.

- It's why we've tried to wire Fathom like we have.
  - Where there's a plurality of leadership...
    - and there is no king.

I assure you, I am not king here.

- As the Lead Pastor, I am not the dictator of this church.
  - I am under the authority of our elders
    - who are under the authority of the members.

**And there are all kinds of mistakes we make...**

**and so I would ask this one thing from you: PRAY FOR US.**

Cause we are trying our best to hear from God...

- and take the steps we need to take...
- but I know that at the end of the day...
- we are fallible human beings.
  - We are shepherds here, yes...
  - but are still sheep.

And you need to PRAY FOR US...

- that God would speak...
- and that God would guide...
- and that despite our frailties and our faults...
- we would lead well.

I know that we can be wrong, which is why we need your prayers.

## ENDING

And I think it's appropriate to speak of this today...

because we are about to have our next **SLIDE MEMBERSHIP** class.

- So, in three weeks,
  - on Sunday, October 6, from 11-1pm...
- We're gonna have our next Covenant Membership Class.

And if you've made Fathom your home church.

- I want to invite you to sign-up for that class...
- to learn more about what membership looks like at Fathom.
  - You can do that online at [fathomchurch.org/info](http://fathomchurch.org/info)
  - OR at the Connection Table.

We want you to join us by pursuing becoming a member of Fathom.

Hey, we, the elders, love you, church.

Let's pray.

## RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – [fathomchurch.org/give](http://fathomchurch.org/give)
- PRAYER
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

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