

Qualifications for Eldership

Above Reproach (Blameless)

1 Timothy 3:2 ²A bishop then must be **blameless**... (KJV, NKJV)

1 Timothy 3:2 ²An overseer, then, must be **above reproach** (NASB)

Titus 1:6-7 ⁶if a man is **blameless**... ⁷For a bishop must be **blameless**... (KJV, NKJV)

Titus 1:6-7 ⁶namely, if any man is **above reproach**...

⁷For the overseer must be **above reproach**...(NASB)

A man of God has a good reputation. This quality is listed in both the letter to Timothy (3:2) and to Titus (1:6-7). Indeed, Paul mentions it twice to Titus.

Paul is using this characteristic as an overarching one. It is a summary of all the qualities Paul is about to list in verses 2-7.

Let's begin with a brief word study, and then we will see some examples of this quality in the Bible.

"Blameless" Defined

ANEPILEPTOS (1 Tim. 3:2)—"from A (a negative particle) and EPILEPTOS ('to seize'); not arrested, i.e. (by implication) inculpable:--blameless, unrebukeable." To be above reproach means to be free from any offensive or disgraceful blight of character or conduct (Strauch).

ANEGKLETOS (Tit. 1:6, 7)—"from A (a negative particle) and a EGKALEO ('to call in'); unaccused, i.e. (by implication) irreproachable:--blameless." A synonym of the foregoing, it means "unaccused," that is, one whose character or conduct is free from any damaging moral or spiritual accusations. It does not mean one is free from every fault, for such a man could never be found, but it means one is not marred by a disgrace that would diminish his authority—he is a man of unblemished reputation. "This applies most critically to the elder's marital/sexual life and to the management of his children" (Strauch).

Also,

AMEMPHOMAI (Phil 2:15; Lk. 1:6; 1 Thess. 3:13)—"from A (negative particle) MEMPHOMAI ('to find fault, blame').

AMOMOS (Col. 1:22)—"from A (negative particle) and MOMOS ('a blemish, flaw'); unblemished (literally or figuratively):--without blame (blemish, fault, spot), faultless, unblamable.

KATAGINOSKO (Gal. 2:11)—“to note against, i.e. find fault with:--blame, condemn (1 Jn. 3:20-21)

- The world casts a critical eye on Christians. We must not give them a “handle” to take hold of; an opening for valid criticism (though we will always be prey to unjust criticism).

1 Peter 3:15-16 ¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; ¹⁶ having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

- All God’s people are called to live holy and blameless lives (Phil. 2:15; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Pet. 3:14).

1 Corinthians 1:8 ⁸ who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be **blameless** in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:15 ¹⁵ that you may become **blameless** and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

Colossians 1:22 ²² in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and **blameless**, and **above reproach** in His sight--

1 Thessalonians 5:23 ²³ Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved **blameless** at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Tim. 5:7 And these things give in charge, that they may be **blameless**.

1 Tim. 6:14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, **unrebukeable**, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Peter 3:14 ¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and **blameless**;

- Since elders are to lead by example, an irreproachable life is indispensable to such a man.

1 Peter 5:3 ³ ... but being examples to the flock

■ Examples

Job

Job 1:1 ¹There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.

Nehemiah

Nehemiah 6:10-13 ¹⁰Afterward I came to the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was a secret informer; and he said, "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you; indeed, at night they will come to kill you." ¹¹And I said, "Should such a man as I flee? And who is *there* such as I who would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in!" ¹²Then I perceived that God had not sent him at all, but that he pronounced *this* prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. ¹³For this reason he was hired, that I should be afraid and act that way and sin, **so that they might have cause for an evil report, that they might reproach me.**

Paul: 1 Thess. 2:10; 2 Cor. 6:3; 2 Cor. 8:20

1 Thessalonians 2:10 ¹⁰You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and **blamelessly** we behaved ourselves among you who believe;

2 Corinthians 6:3 ³We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be **blamed**.

2 Corinthians 8:20 ²⁰avoiding this: that anyone should **blame** us in this lavish gift which is administered by us--

Peter: Gal. 2:11 [KATAGINOSKO]; 1 Pet. 5:1.

Galatians 2:11 ¹¹Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be **blamed**;

1 Peter 5:1 ¹The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:

When the church faced its first organizational problem in Jerusalem, the apostles recommended that seven men “of good reputation” be selected to help solve the problem of food distribution (Acts 6:3).

Later, when Paul came to Lystra on his second missionary journey, he heard about **Timothy**. “He was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium” (Acts 16:2). In other words, he had a good reputation. Notice three things. First, people were talking about Timothy. A good reputation creates conversation—positive feedback. Second, it was more than one person who was doing the talking. A good test of whether or not a person has a good reputation is how many people are talking. All of us have one or two prejudiced friends. But what are people in general saying? This is the true test. Third, people were talking about him in both Lystra and Iconium, that is, in more than one location. Timothy’s reputation was good both at home and abroad. When the two are in alignment, you can rest assured that you are getting a much clearer reading on a man’s inner qualities. Paul was impressed with Timothy’s reputation. This was the man he wanted “to go with him” (Acts 16:3).

It takes time to build a good reputation. But it should be a goal for every Christian, and your goal. In fact, it should happen naturally when a person is growing and maturing in his Christian life. Conversely, the Christian with a poor reputation is no doubt exhibiting traits that are not in harmony with Christian principles, nor are they in harmony with what people naturally expect from mature personalities.