

# THE MEASURE OF A MAN

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I love watching the kids at Disneyland as they go up to the measuring sticks to see if they are big enough to go on the rides. They're so disappointed when they don't quite measure-up high enough. They try to stretch or stand on their tippy-toes.

We are attempting to measure ourselves as men according to the characteristics the apostle Paul listed for mature spiritual men. The very first characteristic is that you be "blameless."

1 Timothy 3:1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

1 Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be **blameless**...

Titus 1:5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you -

Titus 1:6 if a man is **blameless**...

This first characteristic is required of both elders and deacons. Let's start by looking at the words that are translated "blameless." There are actually two different Greek words translated as "blameless" in both passages. In First Timothy the word is *anepileptos* and means *not able to be held*. It describes someone who, if arrested, could not be held because there is nothing to accuse him of.

Adam Clarke says that this word has an application to boxers who are so adept at defending themselves that their opponents never land a blow. You avoid, you defend, against things that would leave their mark.

You might be blamed, or accused. If you are a leader, you will be for sure. But you will remain blameless if there is no truth to the accusations.

Paul used a different word when writing to Titus - *anenglektos*. It means to *call into account*. More than an acquittal, it implies the absence of an accusation in the first place.

The word in Timothy looks back. It is a summary statement. You want to be able to look back and see that you've been "blameless." There's nothing anyone could accuse you of.

The word in Titus is used in a present tense. You are currently keeping yourself in a state of living "blameless," hence no accusation can be brought against you.

This doesn't mean you've never sinned! It means that an overview of your life won't reveal any glaring inconsistencies and that you currently are keeping your life in good order.

This first quality is a kind of spiritual 'background check.' Some of you have undergone background checks for your employment. Your prospective employer is looking for anything that would disqualify you from the position you're being hired to fill.

A full-blown background check is extremely invasive. It is very detailed. You submit to it because you want the job. How much more, then, should we be willing to keep ourselves in a place spiritually to where we could pass the background check.

Remember this characteristic is a qualification for the leaders in the church, for the elders and the deacons. So in a church setting we would examine the background of a man to see if there were anything that might automatically disqualify him.

This is critically important because, once an elder, at least two things are assumed:

1. That man is then held out as an example for all areas of life to all the congregation (First Timothy 4:12; First Peter 5:1-3).
2. Elders are to be granted the benefit of the doubt in the protection from charges they receive in the congregation (First Timothy 5:19).

One of the worst thing you can have is a man lacking in character setting a bad example while being shielded by the generosity of judgment the office warrants.

Without going into detail, one of the Lemoore churches created quite a controversy when they named to the position of elder a man who was a person of interest in an unsolved murder. I can't speak to their motives for doing so but their judgment was totally wrong based on Paul's admonition that the man be "blameless."

Whether **you'd** be disqualified or qualified for leadership after such an examination is one thing. Even if you wouldn't qualify as an elder because of some glaring problem in your past this is still a quality to cherish from this point forward.

That's where another possible translation of these terms becomes helpful. Some Bible versions use the words "above reproach." If you want to live above reproach you need to avoid things that would bring a reproach. You do that by setting higher standards for your conduct than are necessary.

I think the best way to develop this quality is to always consider the effect you have on others, especially believers.

(Paul will discuss our reputation with those outside the church later).

With regard to believers you remain above reproach by setting a higher standard than necessary in areas of Christian liberty. A passage in Romans fourteen is helpful.

Romans 14:14 I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.  
Romans 14:15 Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.

If there is something I can partake in, but it will "destroy" my brother or sister in Christ, I should set a higher standard for myself. While I may think myself mature for being able to partake of the thing, I prove myself immature by insisting on my right to do so at the expense of another.

Romans 14:16 Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil;

"Your good" is whatever your own conscience tells you is good in some doubtful thing that is neither commanded nor condemned in the Bible. But what is "good" to you will be spoken of as "evil" if you allow it to grieve and destroy God's work in your brother.

I can think all I want that I am free to partake of some liberty - and I am - but if it will "be spoken of as evil" I should avoid it.

A few years ago, when Calvary Chapel of Tulare was just starting, one of the brothers thought he was called to be the pastor. Then, at a pot-luck at his house, someone commented on his video library. Commented negatively, that is. Afterwards he told me that he didn't want to pursue the pastorate because he didn't ever want to come under that kind of scrutiny again.

That's good. But I think it reveals a poor understanding of spirituality. We tend to think that only leaders need higher standards or need to be concerned about destroying the faith of others. We tend to think that if we are not called into leadership we can enjoy greater liberty without as much concern.

Yes and no. Yes, we should hold leaders to a high standard. But *no*, we should not relish the fact that we can settle for a lower standard. We should all strive for the same high standards.

We want to be men of God regardless holding any position or office in the church.