

“AN OVERSEER MUST BE...ABLE TO TEACH” (1 TIM 3:2): ΔΙΔΑΚΤΙΚΟΣ AS THE CENTER OF THE CHARACTER CHIASM IN 1 TIMOTHY 3:1–7

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Abstract: *The list of qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 presents an extended chiasm in which the adjective διδακτικός (“able to teach”) stands at the center. Recent discussion of the list has continued to focus on the questions of its genre and possible sources, while giving little attention to its internal structure or organizing principle. The consensus is that the list is not organized according to “any discernible order or logic” (Bray 2019, 184). Against this, the article makes its case by engaging specialist literature on chiasmus and by establishing four criteria for identification. It then demonstrates that 1 Timothy 3:1–7 meets these criteria: the chiasm neatly comprises a recognizable textual unit, exhibits a relatively balanced symmetry, develops a clear set of parallels, and is focused on a central point—the overseer’s ability to teach. Once recognized, this literary structure sheds light on the purpose of the list: it highlights the crucial function of the overseer in teaching Christian truth, and it clarifies the nature of the “ability” as primarily evangelical and ethical, rather than rhetorical and performative.*

Key words: *overseer, elder, able to teach, teacher, teaching, character, qualifications, chiasm, 1 Timothy, Pastoral Epistles*

Paul’s list of qualifications for “overseers” in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 includes the requirement that “an overseer must be...able to teach” (δεῖ οὖν τὸν ἐπίσκοπον...εἶναι...διδακτικόν).¹ While interpreters commonly assume, and occasionally assert, that the qualifications list has no discernible principle of organization, my proposal in this article is that 1 Timothy 3:1–7 presents a chiasm in which the adjective διδακτικός (“able to teach”) stands at the center. The overall chiasm, and the detailed ordering within it, have not been widely recognized in the reception history of the passage or in modern biblical scholarship. In addition, the meaning of διδακτικός is debated, being variously understood as “able to teach,” or

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¹ I refer to the author of 1 Timothy as “the apostle Paul,” or simply “Paul,” following the authorial claim made in the letter (1 Tim 1:1–2; 2:7). Although this claim has been widely rejected in modern scholarship, robust arguments support the authenticity of the letter. See, for example: Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 35A (Doubleday, 2001), 20–23, 55–100; Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT¹ (Eerdmans, 2006), 1–89; Stanley E. Porter, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Baker Academic, 2023), 19–78; David W. Pao, *1–2 Timothy, Titus*, Brill Exegetical Commentary (Brill, 2024), 8–34. I am convinced the letter is authentic, but my argument here does not depend on Paul’s authorship.

“teachable.” The recognition of the chiasm in 1 Timothy 3:1–7, however, sheds light on both the purpose and function of the list, and the meaning of the central term: it simultaneously highlights an overseer’s crucial role in teaching the faith and clarifies the nature of the “ability” required. I begin with a survey of the literature on the structure of the qualifications list, before demonstrating the chiasm, locating διδακτικός at the center of it, and drawing out the significance of this construction for the purpose and function of the list within the letter.

I. THE STRUCTURE OF 1 TIMOTHY 3:1–7 AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ΔΙΔΑΚΤΙΚΟΣ: A SURVEY OF PROPOSALS

A survey of literature on 1 Timothy 3:1–7 reveals limited discussion of the internal structure or organizing principle of the list. Among ancient, medieval, and early modern commentators, one looks in vain for any such discussion.² Modern scholarship, for its part, has focused on the questions of sources and genre, arguing variously that the list reflects the shape and emphases of Greco-Roman duty codes³ or is a distinctively Christian construction.⁴ Rarely, however, have modern scholars given a holistic or comprehensive explanation for Paul’s arrangement of the list.⁵

Observations on the list’s structure have tended to take the form of brief comments amidst discussions focused elsewhere. Several commentators, for example, observe that Paul’s opening charge—that “an overseer must be above reproach”—provides a kind of heading for the list, which is explicated by what follows.⁶ Some observe that the list has an outer frame, created by the repetition of δεῖ

² For the history of the transmission and interpretation of the letter, see Johnson, *Letters*, 20–54; Gerald L. Bray, *The Pastoral Epistles: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, ITC (T&T Clark, 2019), 51–69.

³ For reviews of modern discussion, with constructive proposals, see: Boris A. Paschke, “The *cura morum* of the Roman Censors as Historical Background for the Bishop and Deacon Lists of the Pastoral Epistles,” *ZNW* 98.1 (2007): 105–19; John K. Goodrich, “Overseers as Stewards and the Qualifications for Leadership in the Pastoral Epistles,” *ZNW* 104.1 (2013): 77–97; Abraham J. Malherbe, “Overseers as Household Managers in the Pastoral Epistles,” in *Light from the Gentiles: Hellenistic Philosophy and Early Christianity. Collected Essays, 1959–2012*, vol. 1, ed. Carl R. Holladay et al., NovTSup (Brill, 2014), 559–74.

⁴ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Eerdmans, 1992), 151–52; David Mappes, “Moral Virtues Associated with Eldership,” *BSac* 160 (2003): 202–18; Benjamin L. Merkle, “Are the Qualifications for Elders or Overseers Negotiable?,” *BSac* 171 (2014): 173–76.

⁵ Two exceptions are worth noting: (1) Paul Jeon sees 1 Timothy 3:1–5 as a “minichiasm” nested within a series of larger chiasms that encompass the whole letter (*1 Timothy: A Charge to God’s Missional Household*, 3 vols. [Pickwick, 2017], 2:4–36); (2) Yann Redalié structures 1 Timothy 3:1–7 around the occurrences of καλός/καλῶς (3:1, 4, 7), dividing it into three corresponding parts, referring respectively to the church (3:1–3), the home (3:4–5), and society (3:6–7) (*Paul après Paul: Le temps, le salut, la morale selon les épîtres à Timothée et à Tite* [Labor et Fides, 1994], 351–53). While these proposals are worthy of consideration, the chiasm I propose better accounts for all the details of the passage (see nn49, 65). I have also briefly observed the chiasm in Murray J. Smith, “Presbuteroi in Paul’s Letters to Timothy and Titus: God’s Stewards, Entrusted with the Gospel for the Church and Its Mission,” in *Presbyters in Early Christianity and Its Contexts*, ed. Bart J. Koet, Edwina Murphy, and Murray J. Smith, WUNT 2.662 (Mohr Siebeck, 2026), 213–14.

⁶ E.g., Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 155–56; I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (T&T Clark, 1999), 477; William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC 46 (Thomas

(“must”) at the beginning and the end (3:2; 3:7), together with the conceptual correspondence between “above reproach” (3:2) and “well thought of by outsiders” (3:7).⁷ Others observe microstructures within the list. Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker suggest that the five qualities in 1 Timothy 3:3 are “arranged chiasmatically (abcb’a’)” with the positive quality “gentle” being flanked by two negatives on either side.⁸ Frederick W. Danker, similarly, notes that 1 Timothy 3:3 presents “a series chiefly composed of negatives that contrast with the positive virtues in vs. 2.”⁹ Yet others find significance in the number of qualities listed. Robert W. Yarbrough observes “seven desirable qualities” followed by “four disqualifiers” (3:2b–3),¹⁰ and Quinn and Wacker suggest, further, that since “able to teach” is the seventh desirable quality, it “may be read with some emphasis.”¹¹ Gerald Bray, alternatively, counts twelve qualifications from “above reproach” to “not a lover of money” (3:2–3), and suggests the number twelve represents “the completeness of character” required in overseers.¹² Beyond this, however, Gordon Fee judges that the list is actually *less* orderly than the parallel in Titus 1:5–9,¹³ and Bray states explicitly that the list as a whole does not exhibit “any discernible order or logic.”¹⁴ Crucially, modern scholarship also leaves largely unexplained the presence and location of διδακτικός in a list primarily concerned with the overseer’s personal character and relationships.¹⁵

Nelson, 2000), 152; Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, ECC (Eerdmans, 2000), 256; Johnson, *Letters*, 213; Towner, *Letters*, 241; Michaela Veit-Engelmann, *Die Briefe an Timotheos und Titus: Die Pastoralbriefe* (Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2022), 71; Porter, *Pastoral Epistles*, 276; Pao, *1–2 Timothy, Titus*, 206.

⁷ E.g., Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 477, 483–84; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 153; Quinn and Wacker, *Letters*, 260; Johnson, *Letters*, 213; Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary* (Westminster John Knox, 2002), 86; Ray Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles*, JSNTSup 280 (T&T Clark, 2004), 41; Towner, *Letters*, 71, 250; Veit-Engelmann, *Briefe*, 74.

⁸ Quinn and Wacker, *Letters*, 258.

⁹ BDAG, 672 §1.

¹⁰ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC (Eerdmans, 2018), 195, 197.

¹¹ Quinn and Wacker, *Letters*, 258.

¹² Bray, *Pastoral Epistles*, 183. This is an intriguing possibility, but—as with the enumeration proposed by Yarbrough and Quinn and Wacker (nn. 10, 11)—it does not account for 1 Timothy 3:4–7.

¹³ Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, rev. ed., NIBC 13 (Hendrickson, 1995), 171: the list in Titus 1:5–9 has “a more orderly arrangement” and “a more studied presentation.”

¹⁴ Bray, *Pastoral Epistles*, 184.

¹⁵ This qualification has been explained as an *ad hoc* response to the exigencies of the Ephesian situation. E.g., John Henry Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Cambridge University Press, 1899), 54; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 158, 174. Alternatively, Goodrich sees it as a function of the overseer’s role as “steward” (“Overseers,” 95). Contrast Veit-Engelmann, who judges that the “great importance” (“die große Bedeutung”) of the teaching function in Titus 1:9 is not evident in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 (“hier nicht herauszulesen ist”) (*Briefe*, 72).

II. CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING *CHIASMUS*

While D. Johannes Albrecht Bengel appears to have been the first to label inverted parallelism as *chiasmus inversus*,¹⁶ it was the seminal work of Nils W. Lund that focused scholarly attention on the use of *chiasmus* in the New Testament.¹⁷ The literary form is present across the ancient world,¹⁸ and is common in the Hebrew Scriptures,¹⁹ and in Greco-Roman literature.²⁰ Following Lund, chiasmic structures have been identified across the New Testament,²¹ including in Paul's letters.²² Significantly, while some have argued that the whole of 1 Timothy is an extended chiasm,²³ or that Paul employs chiasm at other points in his letters to Timothy,²⁴ the specialist literature on *chiasmus*, like the commentary tradition, has generally not observed the chiasm in 1 Timothy 3:1–7.

Chiasmus may be simply defined as a literary form that exhibits “inverted parallelism”; a chiasm, that is, exhibits “a two part structure...in which the second half is a mirror image of the first.”²⁵ It is “a symmetrical structure involving an inverted order of corresponding elements.”²⁶ This can be as simple as Paul's affirmation that “Christ” who was “rich...became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor 8:9). It can also extend to much larger units of text in an A–B–B¹–A¹ or A–B–C–B¹–A¹ pattern. Such patterns are a form of literary artistry and can serve to indicate the boundaries of a text, to provide internal structure, to create a sense

¹⁶ D. Joh. Alberti Bengelii, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (David Nutt, 1850 [1742]), 2: 758–60. English translation: John Albert Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament*, trans. Andrew R. Fausset, 5 vols. (T & T Clark, 1858–59), 5:396–99.

¹⁷ Nils W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in the Formgeschichte* (University of North Carolina Press, 1942); cf. “The Presence of Chiasmus in the New Testament,” *JR* 10 (1930): 74–93.

¹⁸ Mary Douglas, *Thinking in Circles: An Essay on Ring Composition* (Yale University Press, 2010), 1–16.

¹⁹ Anthony R. Ceresko, “The Chiasmic Word Pattern in Hebrew,” *CBQ* 38.3 (1976): 303–11; Anthony R. Ceresko, “The Function of Chiasmus in Hebrew Poetry,” *CBQ* 40.1 (1978): 1–10; Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (T&T Clark, 2001), 201–07.

²⁰ Augustine Stock, “Chiasmic Awareness and Education in Antiquity,” *BTB* 14.1 (1984): 23–27; Ian H. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, JSNTSup 111 (Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 22–24; James A. Herrick, *The History and Theory of Rhetoric: An Introduction*, 5th ed. (Routledge, 2013), 40.

²¹ John W. Welch, “Chiasmus in the New Testament,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*, ed. John W. Welch (Gerstenberg, 1981), 211–49.

²² E.g., Joachim Jeremias, “Chiasmus in den Paulusbriefen,” *ZNW* 49 (1958): 145–56; Thomson, *Chiasmus*; John D. Harvey, *Listening to the Text: Oral Patterning in Paul's Letters* (Baker, 1998), 97–118; John Paul Heil, “The Chiasmic Structure and Meaning of Paul's Letter to Philemon,” *Bib* 82.2 (2001): 178–206; *Philippians: Let Us Rejoice in Being Conformed to Christ*, ECL 3 (SBL, 2010), 10–13.

²³ Welch, “Chiasmus,” 226–28; Richard J. Gibson, “The Literary Coherence of 1 Timothy,” *RTR* 55.2 (1996): 53–66; Jeon, *1 Timothy*, 1:27–65. For a critical response to Welch and Gibson, see Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 32–33.

²⁴ E.g., (1) 1 Tim 1:3–7 (Van Neste, *Cohesion*, 20); (2) 1 Tim 2:11–12 (Douglas J. Moo, “1 Timothy 2:11–15: Meaning and Significance,” *TJ* 1 ns (1980): 64; Van Neste, *Cohesion*, 38); (3) 1 Tim 5:17–25 (John P. Meier, “Presbyteros in the Pastoral Epistles,” *CBQ* 35.3 (1973): 335–37; Van Neste, *Cohesion*, 65–66); (4) 2 Tim 3:2–4 (Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 429–30).

²⁵ Welch, “Introduction,” 9–10.

²⁶ Harvey, *Listening*, 99.

of symmetry and completeness, and to aid memory and interpretation.²⁷ Crucially, as Lund observed, *chiasmus* serves to focus attention on the central element or pivot point.²⁸ Developing this insight, John W. Welch notes that “as the structure expands in number of elements, the abrupt repetition by which the last elements of the first half of the system become the first of the second half can draw unusual attention to the central terms, which are repeated in close proximity to each other.”²⁹ This results in “an emphatic focus on the center,” especially when a single term stands there alone in an A–B–C–B¹–A¹ pattern.³⁰ In addition, “the remainder of the system can be used...to compare, contrast, juxtapose, complement, or complete each of the flanking elements,” resulting in “a marked degree of intensification...both by building to a climax at the center as well as by strengthening each element individually upon its chiasmic repetition.”³¹

There is, of course, the danger of forcing an ancient text into the proverbial procrustean bed. George A. Kennedy notes that *chiasmus* is not discussed in the rhetorical handbooks of the classical period.³² Partly on this basis, Stanley Porter and Jeffrey T. Reed argue that it can be nothing more than “a modern critical category.”³³ This judgment, however, is overly restrictive. It is reasonable to assume that Paul could employ—and Timothy recognize—a literary form so common in “the sacred writings” which they had both known from childhood (Acts 22:3; Phil 3:5; 2 Tim 3:15).³⁴ Given the widespread use of *chiasmus* in the ancient world, it is similarly reasonable to assume that the Ephesian church could also recognize such literary artistry.³⁵

Nevertheless, methodological rigor is required.³⁶ While there is no universally recognized set of criteria for the identification of *chiasmus*, my argument here relies on the following four commonly cited identifying features.³⁷

²⁷ For *chiasmus* as a mnemonic and interpretive aid, see esp. Victor M. Wilson, *Divine Symmetries: The Art of Biblical Rhetoric* (University Press of America, 1997), 51; David M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 98–99.

²⁸ Lund, *Chiasmus*, 41.

²⁹ Welch, “Introduction,” 10.

³⁰ “Introduction,” 10.

³¹ “Introduction,” 10.

³² George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 28–29.

³³ Stanley E. Porter and Jeffrey T. Reed, “Philippians as a Macro-Chiasm and Its Exegetical Significance,” *NTS* 44.2 (1998): 217–18.

³⁴ Even if Paul did not write the letter, the author knows and appeals to the Scriptures of Israel (e.g., 1 Tim 1:7; 2:13–14; 4:13; cf. 2 Tim 3:15–16).

³⁵ See Jeon, *1 Timothy*, 1:28–29.

³⁶ Heil, “Chiasmic Structure,” 179n4; Jeon, *1 Timothy*, 1:29.

³⁷ These four criteria are my own synthesis, but draw on the following discussions: David J. Clark, “Criteria for Identifying Chiasm,” *LB* 35 (1975): 63–72; Thomson, *Chiasmus*, 13–45; C. Blomberg, “The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1–7,” *CTR* 4.1 (1989): 4–8; John W. Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus,” in *Chiasmus Bibliography*, ed. John W. Welch and Daniel B. McKinlay (Provo: Research, 1999), 157–74; John Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language: Chiasmus in the Scriptures and Beyond*, 2nd ed. (St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2008), 335–39; Joshua Berman, “Criteria for

(1) Comprehensiveness: the proposed chiasm “should neatly encompass the boundaries of an easily recognizable pericope” and “avoid gaps” within the unit so identified.³⁸ That is, it ought to be able to account for the whole of an identifiable unit of text, without omitting reference to elements in the text which do not fit the proposed pattern.

(2) Balanced symmetry: there should be a “relatively well-balanced symmetry” between the two proposed halves, such that one does not outweigh the other.³⁹ Still, given what seems to be the purpose of at least some chiasms—to develop and intensify the elements of the first half by their repetition and extension in the second—the length of the two halves need not be strictly identical.⁴⁰

(3) Parallelism: the chiasm needs to demonstrate parallelism between the two halves. That is, the “parallel components of the structure must be congruent” and thus “easily recognized as distinctly similar.”⁴¹ Such parallelism is most clearly achieved by lexical repetition, but may also be achieved by morphological, phonetic, syntactical, or semantic similarity.⁴² Parallels may be established, that is, by words which look or sound similar, or by clauses and phrases which have a similar grammatical structure or meaning.

(4) Central point: the proposed chiasm must be able to explain the significance of the emphasis on the central point and show how this is informed by—and also contributes to—the purpose and emphases of the larger literary work.⁴³

All of these will, in the nature of the case, be easier to demonstrate for a microchiasm of several lines of text, than for a macrochiasm, purporting to encompass several chapters or an entire book.⁴⁴ Certainly, it is possible to “find” chiasms where none exist. Nevertheless, where it can be demonstrated that an identifiable literary unit is constructed by means of a balanced set of parallels that serve to highlight the significance of a central point, and especially when that central point is

Establishing Chiastic Structure: Lamentations 1 and 2 as Test Cases,” *Maarav* 21 (2014): 57–69; Jeon, *1 Timothy*, 1:27–31; Wayne Brouwer, “Understanding Chiasm and Assessing Macro-Chiasm as a Tool of Biblical Interpretation,” *CIJ* 53.1 (2018): 99–127; Neal Rappleye, “Chiasmus Criteria in Review,” in *Chiasmus: The State of the Art*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch, *BYU Studies Quarterly* 59, Supplement (BYU Studies, 2020), 289–309.

³⁸ Berman, “Criteria,” 58–59. Cf. Blomberg, “Structure,” 6–7; Thomson, *Chiasmus*, 28–29, 31–32; Rappleye, “Chiasmus Criteria,” 301–02.

³⁹ “Chiasmus Criteria,” 301. Cf. Thomson, *Chiasmus*, 27–29; Berman, “Criteria,” 58.

⁴⁰ Cf. Jeon, *1 Timothy*, 1:31: “A chiasm is operative—irrespective of a balance in length—wherever linguistic parallels and a pivotal section between them are evident.”

⁴¹ Berman, “Criteria,” 58. Cf. Clark, “Criteria,” 65; Blomberg, “Structure,” 6; Jeon, *1 Timothy*, 1:29–30; Rappleye, “Chiasmus Criteria,” 302.

⁴² Cf. Blomberg, “Structure,” 6; Jeon, *1 Timothy*, 1:30; Brouwer, “Understanding,” 110.

⁴³ Lund, *Chiasmus*, 40–41; Welch, “Introduction,” 10; Blomberg, “Structure,” 7; Thomson, *Chiasmus*, 27–28; Wilson, *Divine Symmetries*, 49; Breck, *Shape*, 58, 336–42; Douglas, *Thinking*, 7; Jeon, *1 Timothy*, 1:30; Brouwer, “Understanding,” 100n1; Rappleye, “Chiasmus Criteria,” 301.

⁴⁴ Thomson, *Chiasmus*, 24–25; Porter and Reed, “Philippians,” 220; Brouwer, “Understanding,” 109.

consistent with the message of the larger work, there is good reason to recognize the literary structure as deliberate.⁴⁵

III. FIRST TIMOTHY 3:1–7 AS DELIBERATE CHIASM

Turning to 1 Timothy 3:1–7, we find that the patterned structure in that passage meets the criteria just outlined.

1. *Comprehensiveness.* First Timothy 3:1–7 forms a subunit within the letter, exhibiting clear boundaries and internal cohesion.⁴⁶ The boundary of the subunit is established, on the one side, by “the faithful saying” (3:1: πιστὸς ὁ λόγος), which introduces the qualifications list as showing what is required of “anyone” who “aspires to the office of overseer.”⁴⁷ The transition to the qualifications list itself is signaled by the phrase “therefore an overseer must be” (3:2: δεῖ οὖν τὸν ἐπίσκοπον), which draws an inference from the faithful saying (οὖν) and begins to apply it.⁴⁸ On the other side, the end of the subunit is marked by the phrase Διακόνους ὡσαύτως (“deacons likewise”), which signals a transition to the qualifications of deacons (3:8). The noun δίακονος here clearly refers to a second office, distinct from the office of overseer (cf. Phil 1:1), and the adverb ὡσαύτως signals that the qualifications for this second office are similar to, yet distinct from, those which apply to the first. Within these boundaries, 1 Timothy 3:1–7 exhibits internal cohesion: the whole section refers to a single subject (“the overseer”), which is related to, but clearly distinct from, both the preceding discussion of men and women (2:8–15), and the following discussion of deacons (3:8–13).⁴⁹ We are, therefore, right to recognize the overseer list as a subunit within the letter.

2. *Balanced symmetry.* The chiasm in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 exhibits a balanced symmetry at the conceptual level, as laid out in Table 1.

⁴⁵ John T. Fitzgerald observes that “in general, the most important item within a catalogue tends to occur at either the beginning or the end of the catalogue” (“The Catalogue in Ancient Greek Literature,” in *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, JSNTSup 146 [Sheffield Academic Press, 1997], 291). Nevertheless, as Fitzgerald also “stress[es]” (291n68), “the initial or final position...does not necessarily mean that it is the preeminent item in the list, even when it is amplified.” (italics original)

⁴⁶ Van Neste, *Cohesion*, 41–42. Cf. Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 471–72.

⁴⁷ There is some debate as to whether “the faithful saying” refers to 1 Timothy 2:15 or 3:1b. For review, with arguments in support of the forward reference, see George W. Knight, “1 Timothy 3:1 and Its Saying,” in *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Epistles* (Baker, 1979), 50–61; Paul Ellingworth, “The ‘True Saying’ in 1 Timothy 3:1,” *BT* 31.4 (1980): 443–45.

⁴⁸ The singular reference to “the overseer” (τὸν ἐπίσκοπον) is best taken as a generic singular. See Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 155, 176; Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 477; Towner, *Letters*, 246–47.

⁴⁹ This argues against Jeon’s proposal for a “minichiasm” in 3:1–5, which creates a division within the clearly identifiable subunit of 3:1–7 (n5). While Jeon implicitly justifies this division by appeal to a “microchiasm” in 3:1–16 [A (3:1–5), B (3:6), B¹ (3:7), A¹ (3:8–16)], and demonstrates linguistic parallels in support (1 Timothy, 1:52–54 and 2:3–4), his arrangement causes significant disturbance to the more obvious subunits of 3:1–7, 3:8–13, and 3:14–16 (see Van Neste, *Cohesion*, 41–46).

Table 1: Conceptual Symmetry

A Character and public reputation: above reproach
B Faithful in marriage: one wife
C Personal maturity and godliness: four positive qualities
D Able to teach
C¹ Personal maturity and godliness: four negative disqualifiers
B¹ Faithful in family relationships: children and household
A¹ Character and public reputation: not a new convert, not liable to fall into condemnation

In this chiasm, the outermost pair (A and A¹) concerns the overseer’s reputation with those outside the church: the fundamental qualification of “above reproach” (3:2) is matched and expanded by “not a recent convert,” and “a good testimony from those outside,” so that he will not “fall” into “condemnation” or “disgrace” (3:6–7). The pair within this (B and B¹) concerns the overseer’s leadership of his own family and its relationship to life inside the church: “the husband of one wife” (3:2) is matched and expanded by “managing his own household well” and “keeping his children submissive,” as evidence that he can “care for God’s church” (3:4–5).⁵⁰ The innermost pair (C and C¹) concerns the overseer’s personal maturity and godliness: four positive descriptions—(a) “sober-minded,” (b) “self-controlled,” (c) “respectable,” (d) “hospitable” (3:2)—are matched and further explained by four negative disqualifiers, listed in the same order—(a¹) “not a drunkard,” (b¹) “not violent but gentle,” (c¹) “not quarrelsome,” (d¹) “not a lover of money” (3:3). The matched pairs focus attention on the central point (D): “able to teach” (3:2).

Closer examination of the Greek text, as laid out in Table 2, shows that the symmetry exhibited in the chiasm is relatively balanced.

⁵⁰ I employ masculine pronouns for overseers, here and throughout, because Paul: (1) refers to the officer using the masculine noun τὸν ἐπίσκοπον; (2) employs grammatically masculine adjectives and participates throughout the passage; (3) states that an overseer must be “husband of one wife” or “man of one woman” [μίας γυναῖκος ἄνδρα] (3:4). For an argument that Paul requires elder-overseers to be men, see Smith, “*Presbuteroi*,” 214–15.”

Table 2: Extended parallelism

Α πιστός ὁ λόγος. Εἴ τις ἐπισκοπῆς ὀρέγεται, καλοῦ ἔργου ἐπιθυμεῖ. δεῖ οὖν τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνεπίλημπτον εἶναι,			
Β μιᾷς γυναικὸς ἀνδρα			
C (a) νηφάλιον (b) σώφρονα (c) κόσμιον (d) φιλόξενον			
D διδακτικόν			
C ¹ (a ¹) μὴ πάροινον (b ¹) μὴ πλήκτην, ἀλλ’ ἐπεικῇ (c ¹) ἄμαχον (d ¹) ἀφιλάργυρον			
B ¹ τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον, τέκνα ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ, μετὰ πάσης σεμνότητος (εἰ δέ τις τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου προστῆναι οὐκ οἶδεν, πῶς ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ ἐπιμελήσεται;)			
A ¹ μὴ νεόφυτον, ἵνα μὴ τυφωθεῖς εἰς κρίμα ἐμπέσῃ τοῦ διαβόλου. δεῖ δὲ καὶ μαρτυρίαν καλὴν ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῶν ἔξωθεν, ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὀνειδισμόν ἐμπέσῃ καὶ παγίδα τοῦ διαβόλου.			

In the D line, διδακτικόν stands alone at the center (3:2). This is flanked in the C lines by four positive qualities (3:2), each described by a single Greek adjective (νηφάλιον σώφρονα κόσμιον φιλόξενον), and four negative disqualifiers (3:3), two of which are negated nouns (μὴ πάροινον μὴ πλήκτην), and two of which are alpha-privative negative adjectives (ἄμαχον ἀφιλάργυρον).⁵¹ The C lines thus match very closely, equalling each other in length except for the addition of ἀλλ’ ἐπεικῇ, which adds an extra substantive term to the C¹ line. The B lines and A lines differ more significantly in length (B: three words; B¹: twenty-five words; A: sixteen words; A¹: twenty-eight words). Nevertheless, the conceptual similarities are strong, and the extended instructions in lines B¹ and A¹ are reasonably understood as expansions and intensifications of the shorter instructions in lines B and A (see below). John T. Fitzgerald notes that Greek catalogues commonly expand items at the beginning or end for emphasis,⁵² and Ray Van Neste suggests this “may likely be what is going on in 3:1–7.”⁵³ There is, moreover, a kind of symmetry created across the whole chiasm by the use of positive descriptors in lines A–C matched by predominantly negative descriptors in lines C¹–A¹.

3. *Parallelism.* The balanced symmetry of the chiasm is confirmed by closer study of each set of parallels. The following sections demonstrate how each parallel

⁵¹ In the Textus Receptus and many minuscules, μὴ αἰσχροκερδῆ (“not greedy for gain”) appears between μὴ πλήκτην and ἀλλ’ ἐπεικῇ. The evidence for this reading is, however, limited and late, and best explained as assimilation to Titus 1:7. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (United Bible Societies, 1994), 573.

⁵² Fitzgerald, “Catalogue,” 290–91.

⁵³ Van Neste, *Cohesion*, 42. For similar observations, see: H. Van Dyke Parunak, “Oral Typesetting: Some Uses of Biblical Structure,” *Bib* 62.2 (1981): 163; Jouette M. Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus* (Abingdon, 1996), 67; Harvey, *Listening*, 100–01.

is established and shows that the second half of the chiasm consistently complements the first by negation, extension, or elaboration.

a. *The outer frame: character and public reputation (1 Tim 3:1–2 and 3:6–7).* The outer frame of the chiasm (A and A¹), concerning an overseer's reputation with those outside the church, employs lexical, syntactical, and conceptual parallelism.

The lexical parallel is created by the repetition of the verb *δεῖ* ("it is necessary"), which occurs in both parts of the frame (3:2, 7), together with the adjective *καλός* (3:1: "good work"; 3:7: "good testimony").⁵⁴ In terms of formal syntax, the pairing of the repeated verb *δεῖ* with the correlative *οὕν...δέ* construction, serves to bracket the entire unit and create an *inclusio* of divine necessity around the whole list (3:2: *δεῖ οὕν...*; 3:7: *δεῖ δέ...*).⁵⁵ Although the second element in this syntactical parallel (3:7: *δεῖ δέ...*) comes in the middle of the A¹ line (3:7), a further syntactical parallel *within* the A¹ line is created by the parallel purpose clauses referencing "the devil" (3:6, 7: *ἵνα + ἐμπέσῃ + τοῦ διαβόλου*). These flank the *δεῖ...ἔχειν* construction and draw in all of verses 6–7, indicating that they belong together. Further, the deliberate crafting of the whole list (3:2–7) is evident in the fact that it consists of two sentences with matching syntax (3:2–6 and 3:7): in each sentence, *δεῖ* takes a complementary infinitive (3:2: *εἶναι*; 3:7: *ἔχειν*) affirming what an overseer "must be" and "must have" (3:2, 7). This repeated syntax produces a strong parallel between the two sentences, despite the length of the first (fifty-seven words), and creates a frame around the whole list.

In terms of conceptual content, the initial and final qualifications, in 1 Timothy 3:2 and 6–7 respectively, describe an overseer's general character, and draw out its implications for his public reputation.⁵⁶ The initial qualification—*ἀνεπίλημpton* ("above reproach")—presents a holistic description of character (3:2; cf. 5:7; 6:14), and refers to a laudable pattern of behavior that cannot rightly be condemned (cf. 3:10; Titus 1:6–7: *ἀνέγκλητος*).⁵⁷ Given Paul's doctrine of sin in the Christian life (e.g., Rom 8:13; Phil 2:12–13; Col 3:5, 8–9; 1 Thess 4:1), this cannot mean "sinless,"⁵⁸ but describes a person "who has a good and honorable reputation, and [is] not chargeable with any remarkable vice."⁵⁹ Matching and extending this, the final qualifications require that an overseer must "not be a recent convert" (3:6: *μὴ νεόφυτον*), but "must have a good testimony from those outside" (3:7: *δεῖ δέ καὶ*

⁵⁴ Quinn and Wacker, *Letters*, 260.

⁵⁵ Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 477; Yarbrough, *Timothy and Titus*, 193–94. Contra Porter, *Pastoral Epistles*, 275. Porter is correct that the verb *δεῖ* by itself does not indicate divine necessity, but he fails to take account of the multiple ways that Paul indicates the universal and enduring nature of his instructions in 1 Timothy 2:1–3:16. For demonstration of this point, see Smith, "Presbuteroi," 203.

⁵⁶ Cf. Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 483: "The [final] requirement corresponds to the initial qualification of being *ἀνεπίλημpton*, but here is situated on a broader stage." Similarly, Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 182.

⁵⁷ TDNT 4:9.

⁵⁸ Cf. Martin Luther, "Lectures on First Timothy," in *Luther's Works*, vol. 28 (Concordia, 1973), 284: "Before God no one is above reproach, but before men a bishop is to be so."

⁵⁹ Calvin, *Comm. Tim. and Titus* on 1 Tim 3:2; Cf. Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 155–56; Yarbrough, *Timothy and Titus*, 195.

μαρτυρίαν καλήν ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῶν ἑξωθεν). In the parallel purpose clauses involving “the devil” (3:6–7), the first qualification—“not a recent convert” (μὴ νεόφυτον)—guards against the possibility that an overseer might, through pride, “fall into the condemnation of the devil” (3:6), and the second—having a “good testimony” (μαρτυρίαν καλήν)—against the possibility that an overseer might “fall into disgrace, even a snare of the devil” (3:7).⁶⁰ The high concentration of language relating to public honor (μαρτυρία) and shame (κρίμα, ὀνειδισμός) expands and applies the initial qualification—“above reproach”—and so underlines Paul’s concern for the reputation of the overseer, and of the God he represents.

b. The inner pair: faithfulness in marriage and family life (1 Tim 3:2 and 3:4–5). The next pair in the chiasm (B and B¹) employs semantic or conceptual parallelism, created by the focus of both sections on the overseer’s relationship with his family and its implications for life inside the church.⁶¹ The words ἀνὴρ (“man/husband”) and γυνή (“woman/wife”) in verse 2, and their conceptual counterparts τέκνα (“children”) and οἶκος [2x] (“house”) in verses 4–5, are readily recognizable as “kinship terms,” and this creates a strong correspondence between the two parts of the inner pair.⁶² Thus, while commentators have long debated whether the requirement “husband of one wife” (μῑᾱς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα) is designed to prohibit polygamy, or remarriage after divorce, or—more broadly—to require marital fidelity (cf. Titus 1:6), Paul’s overriding concern—on any reading—is with both the overseer’s character and the stability of his family life.⁶³ The same concern is evident in the second half of the pair, which expands on the overseer’s family life by referring to how he manages his children and household. There is, indeed, a minichiasm in verses 4–5, with the two references to “managing his own household” (τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου + προϊστημι) framing the central requirement that the overseer is “keeping his children submissive, with all dignity” (τέκνα ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ, μετὰ πάσης

⁶⁰ In 3:6 τοῦ διαβόλου (“of the devil”) could be a subjective genitive (the devil brings condemnation; so Towner, *Letters*, 257–58), or an objective genitive (the devil receives condemnation; so Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 164).

⁶¹ Quinn and Wacker rightly observe that 1 Timothy 3:2–3 separates the family qualifications of 3:2 and 4–5, while Titus 1:6 keeps them together. They judge that in 1 Timothy 3:4–5 the qualifications regarding children “have been made into a kind of appendix” (*Letters*, 257). The disjunction is, however, better explained by the chiastic ordering of 1 Timothy 3:1–7.

⁶² LN §10 (111–20). Paul commonly refers to Christian households elsewhere in his letters by combining ἀνὴρ and γυνή with τέκνον and/or οἶκος (1 Cor 7:14; 14:35; Eph 5:22–6:9; Col 3:18–4:1; 1 Tim 3:12; Titus 1:6).

⁶³ For review and discussion from different perspectives, see: Sydney H. T. Page, “Marital Expectations of Church Leaders in the Pastoral Epistles,” *JSNT* 15.50 (1993): 105–20; Merkle, “Qualifications,” 181–84; A. Andrew Das, “The One-Spouse Criterion in the Pastorals (1 Tim 3.2, 12; 5.9; Titus 1.6),” *NTS* 71.3 (2025): 380–94.

σεμνότητος).⁶⁴ The primary concern again—matching that in verse 2—is with the quality of the overseer's family relationships.⁶⁵

c. *The innermost pair: personal maturity and godliness (1 Tim 3:2 and 3:3).* In the innermost pair of the chiasm (C and C¹) the contrastive parallels between the four positive descriptions and their opposites are primarily semantic.

The first subpair (a and a¹) presents a contrastive parallel between νηφάλιος (“sober-minded”) and μὴ πάροις (“not a drunkard”). The adjective νηφάλιος and its verbal cognates νήφω and ἐκνήφω are well attested in Greek literature and carry both the concrete sense of being free from intoxication with alcohol and the extended moral sense of being “sober-minded,” “well balanced,” “restrained in conduct,” that is, “self-controlled” or “level-headed.”⁶⁶ The adjective πάροις (“addicted to wine” or “drunkard”) also relates to alcohol, being a compound word built from οἶνος (“wine”).⁶⁷ This creates, at the semantic level, a clear contrastive parallel between νηφάλιος and μὴ πάροις, even if the former probably carries the extended moral sense, while the latter refers more directly to indulgence in, or addiction to, alcohol.⁶⁸ Indeed, Paul employs the same contrastive parallel—in reverse order—in his instructions regarding “deacons,” where deacons must “not [be] addicted to much wine” (μὴ οἶνω πολλῷ προσέχοντας) (3:8), while the γυναῖκας (whether “wives” [of deacons; KJV, ESV] or “women” [deacons; NRSV, NIV]) must be “sober-minded” (νηφάλιος) (3:11).⁶⁹ He uses the pair again in his instructions in Titus 2:2–3, where the older men are to be νηφάλιος (“sober-minded”), while the older women must “not [be] slaves to much wine” (μὴ οἶνω πολλῷ δεδουλωμένας). Given this repeated use, it seems clear that Paul deliberately sets these two terms in contrastive parallel with each other.

The second subpair (b and b¹) contrasts σώφρων (“self-controlled”) with μὴ πλῆκτης, ἀλλ’ ἐπιεικὴς (“not violent, but gentle”). The positive quality σώφρων means “prudent, thoughtful, self-controlled,”⁷⁰ and parallels ἐπιεικής, meaning

⁶⁴ The phrase μετὰ πάσης σεμνότητος (“with all dignity”) could describe either the father's conduct or the children's obedience or both. Jeon provides a review and discussion, favoring the last option, which emphasizes the “dignity” of the whole family (1 Timothy, 2:31).

⁶⁵ This pairing of qualifications relating to family relationships (3:2, 4–5) argues against Redalić's proposal that 3:1–3 refers to the church, 3:4–5 to the home, and 3:6–7 to society (n5). The whole chiasm is more integrated than such division allows. Note especially that “husband of one wife” (3:2) refers to the home, while “care for God's church” (3:5) refers to the church.

⁶⁶ NIDNTTE 3:389–91; BDAG, 672. Note that Paul elsewhere employs the cognate verb νήφω in the extended moral sense of being “sober-minded” or “reasonable” (2 Tim 4:5; 1 Thess 5:6, 8).

⁶⁷ BDAG, 780.

⁶⁸ See Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 159; Johnson, *Letters*, 215; Porter, *Pastoral Epistles*, 279. Contrast Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, who note that this interpretation is “widespread,” but suggest that the “literal sense” is possible for both terms (*The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneia [Fortress, 1972], 52).

⁶⁹ For alternative interpretations of the γυναῖκας (1 Tim 3:11), see: Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 170–73 (“wives”); Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 492–95 (“women”).

⁷⁰ BDAG, 987.

“gentle, kind, courteous, or tolerant.”⁷¹ Paul employs *σώφρων* elsewhere only in Titus, where it describes a quality required in elder-overseers (1:8) and desired in both older men and younger women (2:2, 5). He likewise employs the cognates *σωφροσύνη* (“reasonableness,” “moderation,” or “self-control”) and *σωφρονέω* (“be of sound mind, reasonable, sensible”) to describe his own disposition (2 Cor 5:13; cf. Acts 26:25), and a common Christian virtue (1 Tim 2:9, 15; Titus 2:6; Rom 12:3). Similarly, Paul commends the virtue of “gentleness (*ἐπιεικής*)” to Titus as an appropriate response to authority (Titus 3:2) and urges the Philippian to be “gentle” (*τὸ ἐπιεικὲς ὑμῶν*) “because the Lord is near” (Phil 4:5).⁷² In 1 Timothy 3:2–3, the combination of the two adjectives indicates that the overseer must be wise, gentle, measured, and self-controlled, a man who does not assert his rights or privileges over others. This stands in stark contrast with what an overseer must not be, that is *πλήκτης*, a “violent” or “pugnacious person,” “a bully.”⁷³ While this word is not used elsewhere in the Septuagint, New Testament, or Apostolic Fathers apart from Titus 1:7, its verbal cognate *πλήσσω* is relatively common in the LXX [23x],⁷⁴ where it usually means to “strike,”⁷⁵ but can also carry the sense of “injure” (2 Sam 4:4; 9:3), “pierce” (Prov 7:23), “sting” (4 Macc. 14:19), or “bite” (Prov 23:32), often in militaristic or violent contexts. Thus, also in this second pair, Paul draws a parallel between two contrasting qualities: the overseer must be “self-controlled,” that is “not violent, but gentle.”

The third subpair (c and c¹) sets *κόσμιος* (“respectable” or “well-ordered”) against *ἄμαχος* (“not quarrelsome”).⁷⁶ The contrastive parallel is, again, semantic, being created by the way “respect” and “good order” are undermined by a “quarrelsome” disposition. Significantly, *κόσμιος* here recalls the same adjective and its cognate verb in 2:9, where good order is to be maintained by godly women who “adorn” (*κοσμέω*) themselves with “respectable” (*κόσμιος*) apparel,⁷⁷ and—similarly (note 2:9: *ὡσαύτως* [“likewise”])—by godly men who pray “without anger or quarrelling” (2:8: *χωρὶς ὀργῆς καὶ διαλογισμοῦ*). Thus, 1 Timothy 2:8–9 implicitly contrasts being “respectable” (*κόσμιος*) with “anger” (*ὀργή*) and “quarrelling” (*διαλογισμός*), and so anticipates the contrast in 3:2–3 between being “respectable” (*κόσμιος*) and “not quarrelsome” (*ἄμαχος*).⁷⁸ Similarly, Paul contrasts respectability

⁷¹ BDAG, 371.

⁷² Cf. 1 Clem. 1:2 which pairs *σώφρων* and *ἐπιεικής* in praising the Corinthians.

⁷³ BDAG, 826.

⁷⁴ LEH s.v. *πλήσσω*; cf. BDAG, 830: “to strike with force.”

⁷⁵ Exod 9:31–32; 16:3; 22:1; Num 25:14–15, 18; 1 Sam 4:2; 5:12; 2 Sam 1:12; 11:15, 22; 2 Chron 29:9; Ps 101:5; Zech 13:6; 1 Macc 9:55; Wis 19:17.

⁷⁶ In our period, *κόσμιος* has the primary sense of “respectable” or “honorable” (BDAG, 561), but likely also carries the connotation “well ordered.” (LSJ, 984; *NIDNTTE* 2:730).

⁷⁷ Note also 1 Timothy 2:9, 15 coordinates *κόσμιος* with *σωφροσύνη* and *σωφρονέω* just as 1 Timothy 3:2 coordinates *κόσμιος* with *σώφρων*. Other near contemporary texts also coordinate *κόσμιος* and *σώφρων* or cognates (see *NewDocs*, 4:151).

⁷⁸ Note also: (1) 1 Timothy 6:4, 11 contrasts “quarrels about words” (*λογομαχίας*) with “gentleness” (*πραΰθυαν*); (2) 2 Timothy 2:23–25 contrasts “quarrels” (*μάχας*), and “quarreling” (*μάχεσθαι*) with “gentleness” (*ἐν πραΰτητι*).

with “quarrelling” in his letter to Titus when he affirms that “the doctrine of God our Savior” will be “adorned” (κοσμῶσιν) by slaves who are “not argumentative” (μὴ ἀντιλέγοντας) (2:9–10), and when he urges Christians to be “not quarrelsome” (ἄμαχος) and to avoid “quarrels about the law” (μάχας νομικάς), since these are “unprofitable and worthless” (3:8–9). It thus appears that, for Paul, “respectable” (κόσμιος and cognates) functions as an opposite of “quarrelsome,” even if the latter can be described by several different terms.

The final subpair (d and d¹) lays out a contrastive parallel between φιλόξενος (“hospitable”) and ἀφιλάργυρος (“not a lover of money”). The parallel here is both morphological-semantic, created by the matching φιλ– (“love”) stem, and conceptual, a logical inference from the financial cost involved in showing hospitality.⁷⁹ In contrast to false teachers, for whom “the love of money (ἡ φιλαργυρία) is a root of all kinds of evils” (1 Tim 6:10), the overseer is to exhibit “love of the stranger” (φιλόξενος).⁸⁰ Paul Jeon observes this parallel and helpfully emphasizes that the overseer is to share “the Savior God’s missional affection for all strangers to be saved [cf. 1 Tim 2:3–4]...by tangibly demonstrating his affection through the use of money.”⁸¹ Significantly, Paul’s only other use of the adjective φιλόξενος is in the parallel list in Titus (1:7–8), where he makes the same contrast in different language. The overseer must be “not greedy for gain, but hospitable” (μὴ αἰσχροκερδῆ, ἀλλὰ φιλόξενον). Similarly, Paul’s only use of the cognate noun φιλοξενία (“hospitality”) sets it in parallel with financial generosity towards others (Rom 12:13), and other early Christian texts make similar connections.⁸² The final subpair thus again exhibits a clear contrastive parallel in which the positive and negative terms clarify and complement each other.

The conceptual parallels between these four pairs suggest that they have been deliberately chosen and ordered to provide a mutually interpretive set of characteristics. In each case the positive descriptor appears first, holding out a fulsome vision of the godly character required of overseers; the negative descriptor appears next, and provides a kind of minimum threshold, specifying the kind of behavior that disqualifies a man from office.

d. The central point: διδακτικός. The chiasm of 1 Timothy 3:1–7 focuses attention on the central requirement that the overseer must be διδακτικός (“able to teach”). In doing so, it simultaneously highlights the overseer’s crucial role in teaching the faith and clarifies the nature of the “ability” required. While it has some-

⁷⁹ Johnson, *Letters*, 214, observes the expense involved in hospitality, but does not draw out the contrastive parallel with “not-a-lover-of-money” (ἀφιλάργυρος).

⁸⁰ The virtue of showing hospitality is common in the New Testament and other early Christian texts (1 Tim 5:10; Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2; 1 Pet 4:9; 1 Clem. 1:2; 10:1–12:8; cf. 3 John 5–8). Note especially Herm. Sim. 9:27.2 which pairs “overseers and hospitable men” (ἐπίσκοποι καὶ φιλόξενοι).

⁸¹ Jeon, *1 Timothy*, 2:27.

⁸² 1 Pet 4:9; Heb 13:2, 5. Note, however, that Didache 15:1 and Polycarp, *Phil.* 5:2 both apply ἀφιλάργυρος to church officials without mention of “hospitality.”

times been suggested that the adjective carries the passive sense of “teachable,”⁸³ most translations,⁸⁴ lexica,⁸⁵ and commentators judge that Paul employs it in the active sense of “able to teach.”⁸⁶ Granted, the word is relatively rare,⁸⁷ and Philo uses it in the passive sense,⁸⁸ while Cyprian and Augustine interpret Paul to mean that a bishop must both “teach” (*docere*) and be “teachable” (*docibilis*).⁸⁹ Philo, however, uses the adjective to modify an attribute (*ἀρετή*, “virtue”) rather than a person,⁹⁰ and Cyprian and Augustine affirm the active sense, even as they also recognize the passive; they are, at any rate, relatively late interpreters from the Latin West. Paul’s own usage, therefore, must take methodological priority.⁹¹ It is true, of course, that the two senses are not mutually exclusive, since an overseer must learn in order to teach, and Paul elsewhere indicates that “the man of God” must remain teachable in submission to God’s word (2 Tim 3:16–17). Still, five lexical and contextual factors together indicate that the active sense predominates.

(1) Lexically speaking, the adjectival *ιχός* ending generally carries an active sense,⁹² and, as Paul A. Himes has shown, such adjectives “quite often” mean

⁸³ Among translations, see Schlatter: “*lehrtüchtig*” (“teachable”); ISV: “teachable.” Among interpreters who consider both active and passive senses are possible, see Ceslas Spicq, *Les Épîtres Pastorales*, 4th ed., 2 vols., EBib 29 (Gabalda, 1969), 433; Quinn and Wacker, *Letters*, 258.

⁸⁴ Vulgate: *doctorem* (“a teacher”), but note 2 Tim 2:24: *docibilem* (“teachable”); Tyndale: “apt to teache”; KJV, RV, ASV: “apt to teach”; RSV, NRSV: “an apt teacher”; NIV, ESV, CSB, NASB, NKJV: “able to teach”; NET: “an able teacher”; Douay-Rheims: “a teacher” (1 Tim 3:2), “apt to teach” (2 Tim 2:24); Luther: “*lehrhaftig*” (“able to teach”); Luther 2017: “*geschickt im Lehren*” (“skilled at teaching”).

⁸⁵ LSJ, 421: “apt at teaching”; TDNT 2:165: “able to teach”; BDAG, 240: “skillful in teaching”; NIDNTE 1:715: “skillful in teaching.”

⁸⁶ E.g., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Tim.* 10 (on 1 Tim 3:2); *Hom. in 2 Tim.* 4 (on 2 Tim 2:1–2); *Hom. in 2 Tim.* 6 (on 2 Tim 2:24); Calvin, *Comm. 1 Tim. and Tit.*, on 1 Tim 3:2; Norbert Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, 4th ed., RNT 7 (Pustet, 1969), 144; Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 53; Jürgen Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus*, EKKNT 15 (Benziger, 1988), 157–58; Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 159–60; Lorenz Oberlinner, *Die Pastoralbriefe. Erste Folge. Kommentar zum Ersten Timotheusbrief*, HThKNT Band XI/2 (Herder, 1994), 117; Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 478; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 174; Towner, *Letters*, 252; Veit-Engelmann, *Briefe*, 72; Porter, *Pastoral Epistles*, 277; Pao, *1–2 Timothy, Titus*, 208.

⁸⁷ Outside Paul (1 Tim 3:2; 2 Tim 2:24), *διδασκτικός* occurs prior to the second century only in Philo (*Congr.* 35; *Praem.* 27; *Mut.* 83, 88).

⁸⁸ Paul consistently uses it to describe Abraham’s *διδασκτικὴ ἀρετή* (“taught virtue”) in contrast with Jacob’s *ἀσκητικὴ ἀρετή* (“practiced virtue”). See Paul A. Himes, “Rethinking the Translation of *Διδασκτικός* in 1 Timothy 3.2 and 2 Timothy 2.24,” *BT* 68.2 (2017): 194–96. Cf. TDNT 2:165.

⁸⁹ Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.10 (alt. 74.10): “A bishop ought not only to teach [*non tantum docere*], but also to learn [*sed et discere*], since he is indeed the better teacher who daily grows and advances by learning better things.” Augustine, *Bapt.* 5.26: “As there were many things which the learned Cyprian might teach [*doctus Cyprianus docere*], so there was still something which the teachable Cyprian might learn [*Cyprianus docibilis discere*].”

⁹⁰ Himes, “Rethinking,” 196.

⁹¹ Cf. Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 160.

⁹² James Hope Moulton and W. F. Howard, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. 2: Accidence and Word Formation* (T&T Clark, 1920), 379; Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, rev. ed. (Harvard University Press, 1956), 237 (§858.6.b); Matthias Stehle, *Greek Word Building*, trans. F. Forrester Church and John S. Hanson, rev. ed., SBLBS 10 (Scholars, 1976), 4.

“characterized by...,”⁹³ suggesting that Paul’s use of διδακτικός emphasizes that overseers must be characterized by teaching, rather than merely teachable.⁹⁴

(2) The immediate context confirms this active sense, since in 1 Timothy 1–2 Paul employs cognates of διδακτικός to charge Timothy to refute those who “teach different doctrine” (1:3: ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖν; cf. 1:7: νομοδιδάσκαλοι), and to command that “a woman” must not “teach” (διδάσκειν) but “remain quiet” in gathered worship (2:12).⁹⁵ By contrast, Paul reports his own divine appointment as “a preacher and an apostle....a teacher of the Gentiles [διδάσκαλος ἐθνῶν]” (2:7), which primes his auditors to ask “who, then, rightfully promotes the apostolic teaching in the church?” The next occurrence of teaching language provides the initial answer: overseers, who have responsibility to lead and care for God’s church (3:4–5), must also be “able to teach” (3:2: διδακτικόν).

(3) Paul’s subsequent instructions regarding “elders” (5:17–25: πρεσβύτεροι) further support this reading, for both “the overseer” and “the elders” “rule well” (3:4–5 and 5:17: προϊστέμι + καλῶς) and “teach” (3:2: διδακτικός; 5:17: διδασκαλία).⁹⁶ Since the latter passage refers to active teaching on the part of the elders “who labor in...teaching” (οἱ κοπιῶντες ἐν...διδασκαλίᾳ), it seems clear that Paul requires overseers to take an active teaching role.

(4) Paul’s only other use of διδακτικός in 2 Timothy 2:24 further underlines the active sense of the adjective. Paul’s charge to Timothy—that “the Lord’s servant must” be “able to teach” (δοῦλον δὲ κυρίου δεῖ...εἶναι...διδακτικόν)—follows his earlier command to entrust the apostolic teaching “to faithful men” (πιστοῖς ἀνθρώποις) “who will be able to teach others also” (οἵτινες ἱκανοὶ ἔσονται καὶ ἑτέρους διδάξαι) (2:2),⁹⁷ and is expanded by reference to the active teaching work of “correcting opponents with gentleness” (ἐν πραΰτητι παιδεύοντα τοὺς ἀντιδιατιθεμένους) (2:25; cf. Titus 1:9).⁹⁸

(5) Paul’s parallel list of qualifications for elder-overseers in Titus 1:5–9 further supports the active sense,⁹⁹ since it requires that elder-overseers must be able

⁹³ Himes, “Rethinking,” 191, cites: Luke 3:22 (σωματικός); 1 Cor 2:13 (πνευματικός); Titus 3:10 (αἰρετικός); Heb 7:11 (Λευιτικός); 2 Pet 1:19 (προφητικός). We can add: 1 Cor 2:14; 15:44 (ψυχικός).

⁹⁴ “Rethinking,” 203.

⁹⁵ However we understand this disputed passage, Paul’s instruction in 2:12 forbids at least some kind/s of active teaching. For bibliography, see: Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9–15*, 3rd ed. (Crossway, 2016), 363–94.

⁹⁶ The relation between “the overseer [τὸν ἐπίσκοπον]” (1 Tim 3:2) and “the elders [οἱ πρεσβύτεροι]” (5:17) is debated. For bibliography and arguments that Paul refers to a single office by two different titles, see Smith, “*Presbuteroi*,” 193–97. In addition to the works cited there, see Pao, 1–2 *Timothy*, Titus, 202–03.

⁹⁷ While πιστοῖς ἀνθρώποις could be translated “reliable people” (NIV), it is better translated “faithful men” (ESV) and taken as reference to the elder-overseers. See Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 391–92.

⁹⁸ Cf. *Pastoral Epistles*, 159–60; Merkle, “Qualifications,” 181.

⁹⁹ For detailed comparison of 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9, see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 156. For the significance of the parallel for the meaning of διδακτικός, see Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 159–60; Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 478; Towner, *Letters*, 252.

to “give instruction in sound doctrine [παρακαλεῖν ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ] and also to rebuke [ἐλέγχειν] those who contradict it” (1:9).¹⁰⁰

Taken together, these factors indicate that Paul employs διδασκτικός in 1 Timothy 3:2 in an active sense. The emphasis, however, falls not so much on the overseer’s technical skill in teaching as on his activity as a teacher.¹⁰¹ While the overseer must have a basic competence in effectively communicating the truths of the faith, he does not need to be a trained rhetorician, a master pedagogue, or a brilliant orator. Crucially, by locating this requirement at the center of the character chiasm in 1 Timothy 3:1–7, Paul draws the closest possible relationship between the overseer’s life and teaching, indicating that the character of his life is a key part of what qualifies him to teach and what also exhibits the fruit of that teaching as a model for the church and a witness to those outside.

4. *The central point within the letter: the saving significance of teaching in 1 Timothy.* The recognition of 1 Timothy 3:1–7 as a chiasm that focuses attention on the central qualification—“able to teach”—is confirmed when we observe the ways in which the chiasm is informed by, and contributes to, Paul’s concern for faithful teaching throughout the letter. Paul’s διδασκτικός requirement, in fact, forms part of a readily discernible semantic chain,¹⁰² created by the recurrence of “teaching” language from the beginning to the end of the letter.¹⁰³ While much could be said, the following four brief observations regarding (1) the character of the teacher, (2) the content of “the teaching,” (3) the competencies required, and (4) the eschatological context, together clarify the nature of the teaching ability required in overseers, and confirm its central significance.

First, the inseparable connection between an overseer’s ability to teach and his personal character, evident in the chiasm, is confirmed throughout the letter. On the one hand, the negative example of the “false teachers” shows that those who “swerve away” from “a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith” (1:3–7) into a corrupt lifestyle (4:1–3; 6:3–5; cf. 2 Tim 3:1–9; 4:3–4; Titus 1:10–16) thereby disqualify themselves as teachers of the truth. On the other hand, Paul’s charge to Timothy, to “watch” both himself and “the teaching” (ἐπεχε σεαυτῷ καὶ

¹⁰⁰ Himes notes that Origen (*Cels.* 3.48.21; *Philoc.* 18.19) recognizes the parallel between 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:9 and twice “inserts the word διδασκτικός into the terminology of Titus 1.9” (“Rethinking,” 198).

¹⁰¹ Himes notes that if Paul had wanted to emphasize *skill* in teaching, he could have used δύναται διδασκεῖν (“Rethinking,” 200; citing Strabo, *Geogr.* 14.5.15 and Pseudo-Philo [1QGen 4.104]).

¹⁰² For the concept of a semantic chain, see Michael A. K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, “Text and Context: Aspects of Language in a Social-Semiotic Perspective,” *Sophia Linguistica* 6 (1980): 4–90. Applied to 1 Timothy, see Van Neste, *Cohesion*, 16–17. Cf. Jeon, *1 Timothy*, 1:3–5.

¹⁰³ (1) διδασκαλία [8x] (“teaching”): 1:10; 4:1, 6, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1, 3; cf. 2 Tim 3:10, 16; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 7, 10; (2) διδάσκαλος [1x] (“teacher”): 1 Tim 2:7; cf. 2 Tim 1:1; 4:3; (3) διδάσκω [3x] (“teach”): 1 Tim 2:12; 4:11; 6:2; cf. 2 Tim 2:2; Titus 1:11; (4) ἐτεροδιδασκαλέω [2x] (“teach different doctrine”): 1 Tim 1:3; 6:3; (5) νομοδιδάσκαλος [1x] (“teacher of the law”): 1 Tim 1:7. Note also: (6) διδαχή (“teaching”): 2 Tim 4:2; Titus 1:9; (7) καλοδιδάσκαλος (“teacher of the good”): Titus 2:3. For analysis, see esp. Claire S. Smith, *Pauline Communities as ‘Scholastic Communities’: A Study of the Vocabulary of ‘Teaching’ in 1 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, WUNT 2.335 (Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 53–84.

τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ), both his “life and doctrine” (1 Tim 4:16, NIV), confirms the integral, two-way, relationship between the overseer’s life and his ability to teach. Only a man whose life conforms to the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 is “able to teach” in the sense required.

Second, an overseer’s knowledge of, and personal commitment to, “the truth” of “the faith” is also a non-negotiable element of what it means to be “able to teach.” Throughout the letter, Paul employs the articular noun ἡ διδασκαλία to speak of “the teaching” (4:13, 16; 6:1, 3) and also pairs the noun with adjectives to describe it as “the sound teaching” (1:10: ἡ ὑγιαίνουσα διδασκαλία; cf. 6:3), “the good teaching” (4:6: ἡ καλὴ διδασκαλία), or “the teaching that accords with godliness” (6:3: ἡ κατ’ εὐσέβειαν διδασκαλία).¹⁰⁴ He otherwise refers to the same body of teaching as “the truth” (3:15; 4:3; 6:5: ἡ ἀλήθεια) and “the faith” (1:19; 3:9; 4:1, 6; 5:8; 6:10, 12, 21: ἡ πίστις).¹⁰⁵ These definite expressions, which recur in 2 Timothy and in Titus,¹⁰⁶ indicate that this “teaching” (διδασκαλία) is “a relatively fixed ‘orthodoxy,’ which the churches have received and which it is their duty to preserve against heresy.”¹⁰⁷ This “teaching” is grounded in “Scripture,” since Timothy is to “devote” himself “to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching [τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ]” (4:13),¹⁰⁸ and “all Scripture [πᾶσα γραφή],”¹⁰⁹ being “breathed out by God,” is profitable for teaching [πρὸς διδασκαλίαν]” (2 Tim 3:16–17; cf. 4:2).¹¹⁰ This Scriptural teaching is centered on “the gospel” (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) of God’s “glory” (δόξα) and “grace” (χάρις) in Christ (1 Tim 1:11, 14–15),¹¹¹ but it also includes the right use of “the law” (ὁ νόμος), and its ethical instruction regarding the life of “godliness” (εὐσέβεια) (1:8–11; 3:16; 4:1–7; 6:3; cf. Titus 1:1). The Lord Jesus himself appointed Paul as “a herald and apostle and teacher” of this gospel-centered body of truth (1 Tim 2:7; cf. 1:11; 2 Tim 1:8–12; Titus 1:3), and Paul, in turn, “entrusted” it to Timothy (1 Tim 1:18; 6:20; cf. 2 Tim 1:14), and—through him—to

¹⁰⁴ Smith judges that διδασκαλία can refer either to “that which is taught” (1:10; 4:1, 6; 6:1, 3) or to “the activity of teaching” (4:13, 16; 5:17), but notes that even when teaching activity is emphasized, teaching content is assumed (*Pauline Communities*, 66–67).

¹⁰⁵ BDAG, 820 §3.

¹⁰⁶ 2 Tim 1:13–14; 2:15, 18; 3:8, 10; 4:3–4, 7; Titus 1:1, 9, 13–14; 2:1, 2, 10. Cf. 2 Tim 2:25; 3:7.

¹⁰⁷ NIDNTTE 1:715. For similar judgments: Roloff, *Timotheus*, 157–58; Philip H. Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction: The Structure of Theology and Ethics in the Pastoral Epistles*, JSNTSup 34 (JSOT Press, 1989), 121–42; Egbert Schlارب, *Die gesunde Lehre: Häresie und Wahrheit im Spiegel der Pastoralbriefe*, Marburger Theologische Studien 28 (N. G. Elwert, 1990), 196–206; Smith, *Pauline Communities*, 75.

¹⁰⁸ In 1 Timothy 4:13, “the reading” (τῇ ἀναγνώσει) does not specify Scripture as the source or gathered worship as the context, but both are implied (cf. 2 Cor 3:14; Acts 13:15). See Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 563.

¹⁰⁹ Under the category of “all Scripture” (πᾶσα γραφή) Paul probably includes not only the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, but also early written apostolic testimony to Jesus (1 Tim 5:18, citing Luke 10:7 as “Scripture”; cf. 1 Tim 6:3), and the written form of Paul’s own apostolic teaching (1 Tim 3:14; 4:6, 11; 5:7; 6:2b; cf. 2 Tim 2:14; Titus 2:15; 3:8). See L. Timothy Swinson, *What Is Scripture? Paul’s Use of Graphé in the Letters to Timothy* (Wipf and Stock, 2014), 148–65.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Smith, *Pauline Communities*, 71: The “teaching” depends “on the written Word of God for content.” Similarly, Towner, *Letters*, 593; Yarbrough, *Timothy and Titus*, 430.

¹¹¹ 1 Tim 1:11, 14–15; 2:5–6; cf. 2 Tim 1:8–10; 2:8; 4:5; Titus 2:11–15; 3:4–8.

the church’s elder-overseers (1 Tim 3:2; 5:17; cf. 2 Tim 2:2; Titus 1:5, 9). Thus, “if anyone aspires to the office of overseer” (3:1), but “teaches differently”—whether regarding the evangelical heart of the faith or its ethical entailments—he disqualifies himself as a teacher of the truth (1:3; 6:3; cf. 1:10; 4:1).¹¹² To be “able to teach” an overseer must know the Scriptures, rightly interpret them according to the apostolic gospel (cf. 2 Tim 2:15), and be committed to teaching the truth of the faith in all its fullness (cf. Titus 1:9; Acts 20:27).

Third, the specific competencies included in being “able to teach” are also clarified by Paul’s instructions regarding “teaching” throughout the letter. On the one hand, faithful teaching involves the positive functions of “guarding” the “good deposit” (1 Tim 6:20: φυλάσσω; cf. 2 Tim 1:14), “teaching” what accords with sound doctrine (4:11; 5:17; 6:2: διδάσκω and cognates; cf. 2 Tim 2:2; 3:16; Titus 2:3), “exhorting” in the faith (4:13; 5:1; 6:2: παρακαλέω; cf. 2 Tim 4:2; Titus 1:9; 2:6, 15), and “commanding” obedience (1:3; 4:11; 5:7; 6:17: παραγγέλλω). On the other hand, it also entails the negative function of “reproving” those in error (5:20: ἐλέγχω; cf. 2 Tim 3:16; 4:2; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:15).¹¹³ While Paul does not directly apply all these verbs and noun phrases to overseers, his own apostolic ministry and its extension in Timothy and Titus are surely designed to provide a model for them, and so confirm that while Paul does not require overseers to have advanced rhetorical or oratorical skills, he does demand in them a basic competency in both communicating the truth of the faith and refuting errors.

Finally, the significance of Paul’s requirement that overseers must be “able to teach” is confirmed by the eschatological context “in the last times [my trans.]” (4:1: ἐν ὑστέροις καιροῖς; cf. 2 Tim 3:1). This is the whole period between the past “appearing” (τῆς ἐπιφανείας) of “our Savior Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 1:10; cf. Titus 2:11), and his future “appearing” (τῆς ἐπιφανείας) to establish his final kingdom (1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 4:1, 8; cf. Titus 2:13).¹¹⁴ While Paul’s concern for faithful teaching is partly explained by the immediate problem of false teaching in Ephesus—whatever its precise form (1 Tim 1:3–7, 18–20; 4:1–5, 6–10; 6:2b–10, 20–21; cf. 2 Tim 2:14–26; 3:1–9; 4:1–5, 14)—false teaching will be, according to Paul, characteristic of the whole of “the last days” (4:1–5; cf. 2 Tim 3:1; 4:3–5).¹¹⁵ For this reason, Paul not only charges Timothy to teach the truth and refute error, but also calls on him to “entrust” the truth “to faithful men, who will be able to teach others” (2 Tim 2:2), and so requires that these men—the overseers—must be “able to teach” (1 Tim 3:2;

¹¹² Cf. Jeon, *1 Timothy*, 2:22: “Rather than ability, skill, or talent, the audience understand that Paul has allegiance in view—to him and, therefore, to Christ Jesus.”

¹¹³ Note further descriptors in 2 Timothy 3:16; 4:2; Titus 1:9, 11; 2:1, 4, 11 15; 3:1, 10.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 188. For Paul’s eschatological scheme here, see: Philip H. Towner, “The Present Age in the Eschatology of the Pastoral Epistles,” *NTS* 32.3 (1986): 427–48; Dogara Ishaya Manomi, “Salvific, Ethical, and Consummative ‘Appearances’ in the Pastoral Epistles? A Response to Rob van Houwelingen,” *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 9.1–2 (2019): 109–17.

¹¹⁵ See G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Baker, 2011), 819–23, esp. 821–22.

cf. 5:17; Titus 1:9).¹¹⁶ The overseer's teaching is, therefore, charged with eschatological significance, for only through the teaching of the gospel and the whole truth of God will salvation come to the nations (2:3–7; 4:10–11, 14–16) and the church be equipped for good works (2 Tim 3:15–17) and completed in “love” (1 Tim 1:5).

IV. CONCLUSION

My goal in this article has been to demonstrate that 1 Timothy 3:1–7 is arranged as a chiasm that centers on the requirement that overseers must be “able to teach.” The chiasm has been demonstrated from the way that it neatly encompasses and explains a recognizable unit of text, exhibits a relatively balanced symmetry, develops a recognizable set of parallels, and focuses on a central point, which highlights a key theme in the letter: “an overseer must be ... able to teach.” The purpose of the chiasm is to emphasize both the quality of the overseer's relationships—with his family, the church, and those outside—and the integrity of his personal life, while focusing attention on the central qualification: “an overseer must be ... able to teach.” Moreover, when read within the context of the whole letter, it is clear that this “ability” is primarily evangelical and ethical rather than rhetorical and performative.¹¹⁷ While an overseer must be effective in communicating the faith and refuting errors, he is primarily qualified (or disqualified) by his orthodoxy and his orthopraxy, by his life and his doctrine.¹¹⁸ Put simply, Paul requires in overseers the ability to teach “the gospel” and “the truth” of God in the context of a life conformed to the character of Christ. In God's sovereign grace, this is what will sustain the church in its life and mission, through the trials of the “last days,” “until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (6:14).

¹¹⁶ See n. 96 for the “faithful men” as elder-overseers (2 Tim 2:2). Paul's statement implies a chain of transmission from Paul to Timothy to “faithful men” and on to “an indefinite number” of others who “will in turn carry on this process of teaching the apostolic message” (Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 392).

¹¹⁷ Cf. Theodore, *Comm. 1 Tim. 3.2* in Rowan A. Greer, ed. *Theodore of Mopsuestia: The Commentaries on the Minor Epistles of Paul*, WGRW 26 (Brill, 2010), 579: “Paul does not mean that an *apt teacher* is someone who can make a long procession of words in the church—very few usually accomplish this—but someone who by whatever speech, both in the community and with individuals, is able to instruct each person in the doctrines of true religion. And since it is as with true religion so with virtue, he should be able to instruct them in what ways they ought to fulfill those duties by which true religion and virtue can especially gain increase.”

¹¹⁸ For similar conclusions, see: Jeon, *1 Timothy*, 2:23.