

Improve Your Influence

Lists sharpen memory and bring focus. Scripture is full of them: the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the fruit of the Spirit, the armor of God. One often-overlooked list is Paul's description of elders in 1 Timothy 3.1–7. Its value extends far beyond church leadership.

Elders model spiritual maturity. Traits like self-control, gentleness, and hospitality aren't just leadership qualifications — they're marks of Christlike character for anyone who wants to influence others. Paul's list is a blueprint for a life worth following. Here are thirteen influence-building traits that matter for every believer:

1. **Be Passionate**—Influence begins with desire. Paul says, “If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.” The word for “desires” (epithymeo) means a deep, eager longing. When you're passionate about helping others grow spiritually, your life gains meaning and direction. Influence is about change — and passion fuels action. Jesus called His people salt, light, and leaven (Matthew 5.13–16; 13.33), small but powerful agents of transformation. Aspire to make a difference and let your passion point others to God.
2. **Be Blameless**—Credibility is the foundation of influence. “Blameless” (anepileptos) doesn't mean flawless — only God is perfect. It means living honorably, repenting when wrong, and striving for holiness. People forgive flaws if they see sincerity and growth. True influencers welcome accountability and seek the light (John 3.21). Integrity and consistency build trust, and trust opens hearts.
3. **Be Devoted**—Leadership begins at home. Being “the husband of one wife” describes deep devotion to one's spouse — physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Marriage is training ground for leadership. Loving well at home strengthens your credibility everywhere else. You can't lead better than you love (Ephesians 5.25; Titus 2.4). A strong marriage builds a solid reputation.
4. **Be Coolheaded**—“Sober-minded” (nephaios) means clear-headed and self-controlled. Effective leaders don't let impulse, emotion, or excess cloud their judgment. Calm people bring clarity in confusion and peace in conflict. A steady spirit commands respect (Philippians 4.5; 1 Peter 5.8). Influence grows when emotions are managed and decisions are deliberate.
5. **Be Self-Possessed**—“Self-controlled” (sophron) means disciplined and sound-minded. Wise leaders guard their thoughts, resist destructive emotions, and choose long-term good over short-term gain (Proverbs 25.28; Galatians 5.22–23). Spiritual thinking produces peace and joy (Romans 14.17). Sound minds lead to sound lives — and lasting influence.
6. **Be Well-Behaved**—“Respectable” (kosmios) refers to decent, orderly conduct. Good behavior is powerful; it reflects maturity and earns respect. Actions rooted in selfishness bring conflict, but

selfless actions foster peace and trust (James 3.13–18; Philippians 2.3–4). Behavior is your living résumé. Let your life consistently bear good fruit (Matthew 7.20).

7. **Be Hospitable**—“Hospitality” (philoxenos) means loving strangers. It’s more than sharing meals — it’s making others feel seen, valued, and welcome. Hospitality builds credibility through connection (Luke 14.12–14; Matthew 25.35–40). You don’t need a perfect home to entertain, just a willing heart. Influence grows when you open your life to others.

8. **Be Transformative**—“Able to teach” (didaktikos) means skilled at explaining truth clearly. Influence requires instruction as well as example. Like Moses (Deuteronomy 6.7) and Jesus (Matthew 28.19–20), teach both formally and informally, adapting to each person. Teaching isn’t about showing how much you know — it’s about helping others grow (2 Timothy 2.24–26).

9. **Be Clearheaded**—“Not a drunkard” (paroinos) means refusing anything that impairs judgment or damages your example. Alcohol dulls the mind and weakens credibility (Proverbs 20.1). The question isn’t just, “Is it allowed?” but “Is it wise?” Clearheaded leaders stay ready to serve, choosing what strengthens their influence and blesses others.

10. **Be Gentle**—“Gentle” (epiekes) means mild, peaceable, and kind. Gentleness isn’t weakness. It’s being in control of yourself instead of being ruled by impulse or emotion. Christlikeness creates a safe atmosphere for growth and reflects the Spirit’s presence (Galatians 5.22–23). A gentle spirit builds bridges, defuses conflict, and wins hearts (Proverbs 15.1; Matthew 5.9).

11. **Be Content**—“Not a lover of money” (philargyros) calls for contentment and generosity. Covetousness distracts from what truly matters and erodes influence (Luke 12.15; Colossians 3.5). True riches are found in Christ (Colossians 2.3). Trust God’s provision and use what you have to bless others (Hebrews 13.5). Contented leaders lead with joy, focus, and purpose.

12. **Be Nurturing**—A leader “manages his household well” (proistamenon). Parenting is leadership training. Guide your family with truth and grace (Ephesians 6.4), balancing firmness with tenderness. Consistent, loving discipline builds trust and teaches reverence. How you lead at home largely determines whether others will trust you to lead them (1 Timothy 3:4).

13. **Be Mature**—A leader must not be a “novice” (neophutos). Maturity takes time, trials, and training. Pride is a snare that leads to a fall (Proverbs 16.18). Mature leaders pace change wisely, listen well, and value both people and progress. They rely on moral authority, not titles. Leadership isn’t about power — it’s about trust, wisdom, and a life worth following.

Paul’s list is a portrait of holy living and heightened influence. By living these traits, you reflect Christ and shine as a light in the world. To lead well, live the list.